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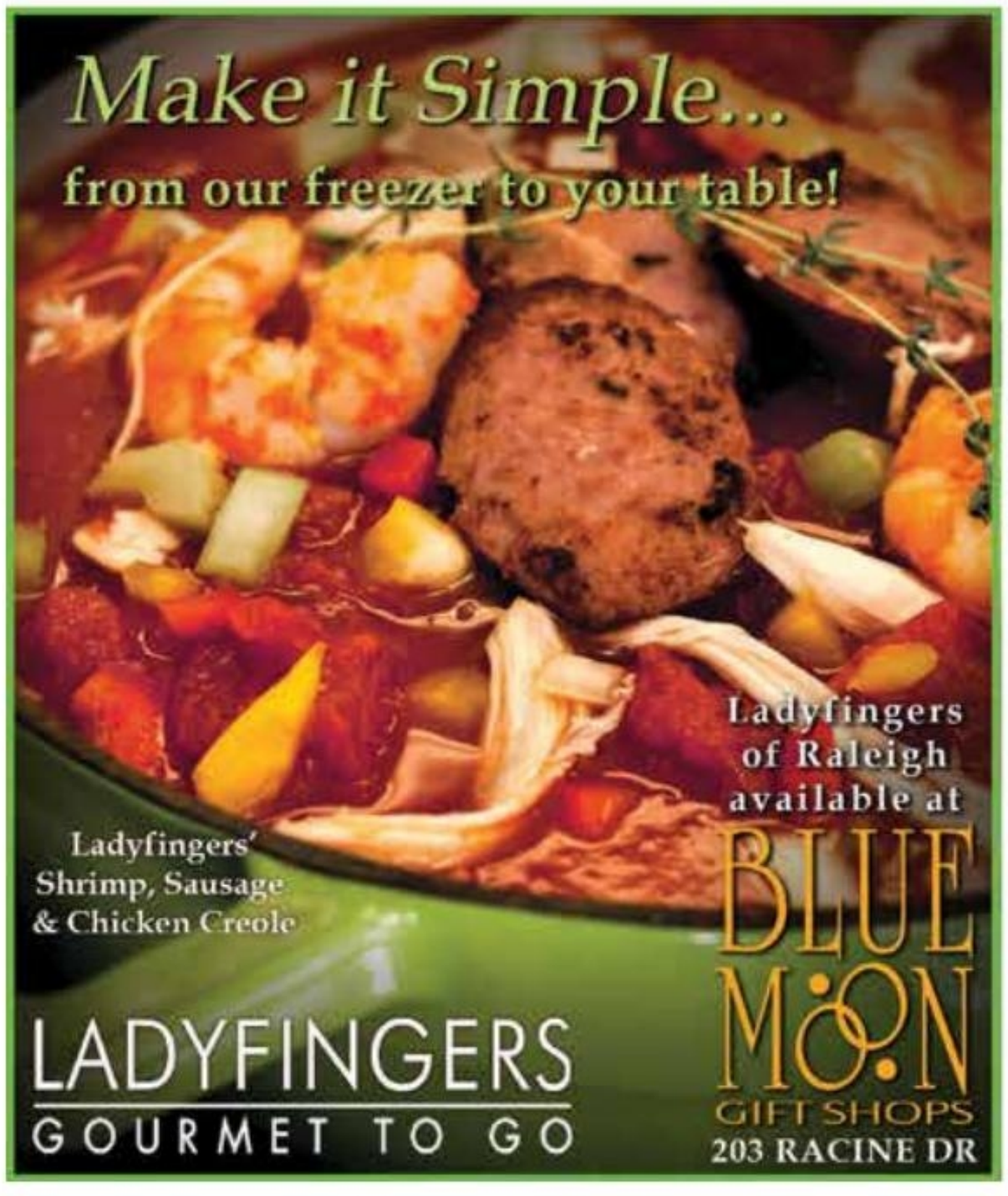
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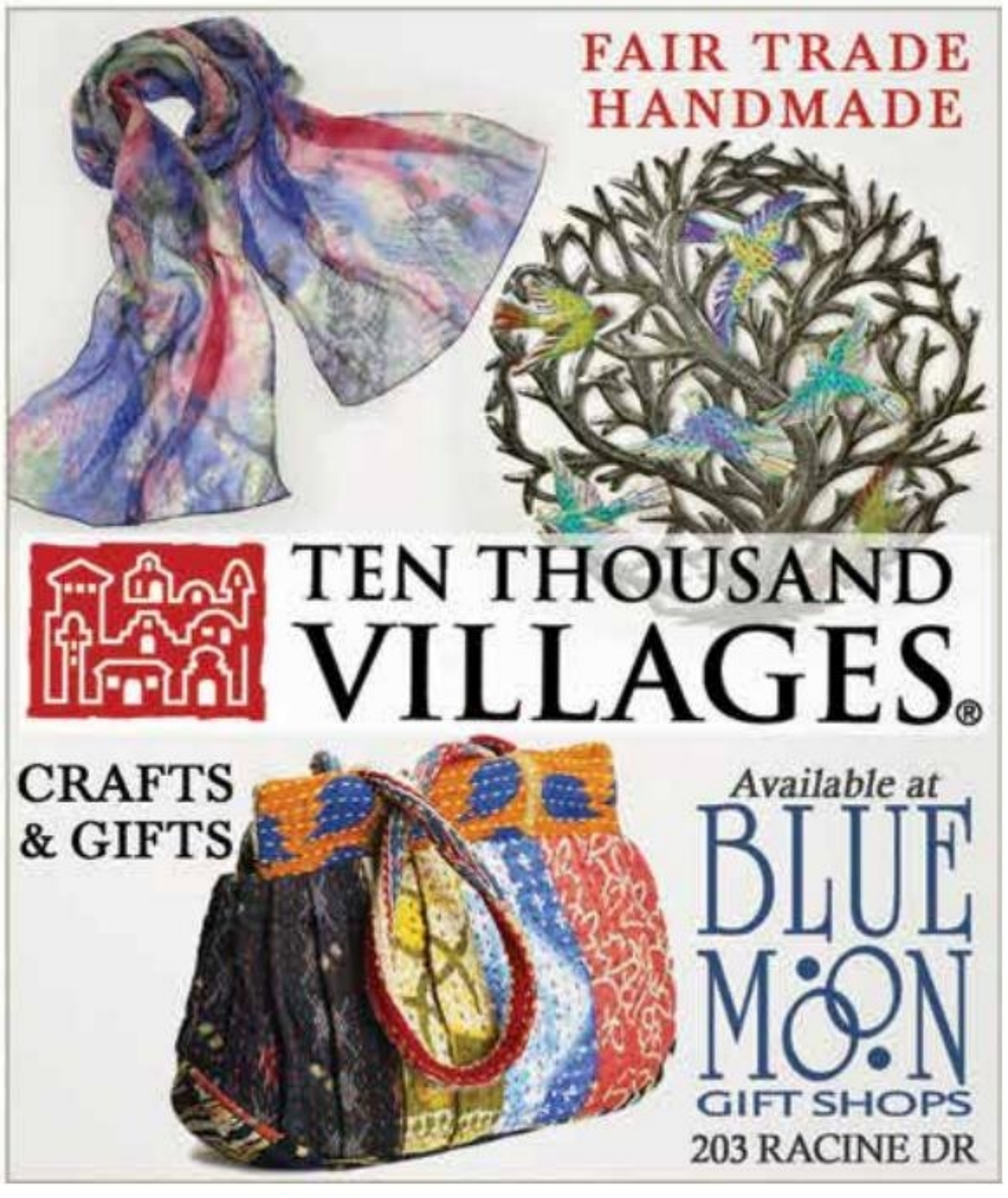
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Ancient Roads

Wherever in the world they happen to be, all of them lead home

By Jim Dodson

Over a year ago I began traveling the route of the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road, said to be the most traveled road of Colonial America, the frontier highway that brought a quarter of a million European immigrants to the Southern wilderness during the first two-thirds of the 18th century.

From 1700 to the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, successive waves of German, Scotch-Irish, English, Welsh and Swiss immigrants — many of them refugees fleeing their war-ravaged homelands — found their way to the Southern backcountry following an ancient trading path used by Native American tribes for millennia.

The Great Road, as I prefer to call it, stretched from Philadelphia's Market Street to Augusta, Georgia, traversing the western portions of half a dozen colonies before crossing the Savannah River in Georgia.

Both wings of my family (and quite possibly yours) came down it — my father's English and Scottish forebears who settled around Mebane and Hillsborough in the mid-1700s followed by my mother's German ancestors, who hopped off the road in Hagerstown and migrated into the hills of what would later become West Virginia.

In one way or another, much of my life has been spent traveling major sections of this old road from the Carolinas to western Pennsylvania, for either work or pleasure or when I left my native South for two decades to live on the coast of Maine.

The route of the original road is buried beneath modern highways, towns and cities, suburbs and shopping centers, but it is still with us — a pathway fully determined by extensive research by scholars, state archivists, local historians and organizations that specialize in finding historic lost roads. As one leading old road researcher put it bluntly to me, "The Great Wagon Road is the granddaddy of America's lost roads — the reason we're all here."

I first heard about it on a winter day in 1966 when my father took my brother, Richard, and me to shoot mistletoe out of the oak forest that grew around our grandmother's long abandoned home place off Buckhorn Road near Chapel Hill. On the way home, he showed us the site of his great-grandfather's gristmill and furniture shop where I-40/85 now crosses the historic Haw River. That man's name was George Washington Tate. A street in Greensboro is named for this rural polymath who helped establish Methodist churches toward the foothills and made such beautiful cabinetry. Surviving pieces are displayed in important decorative art museums across the South.

From that day forward, I'll admit, I was quietly obsessed with the Great Road, germinating a plan to someday travel the road of my ancestors just to see what they had seen of early America's landscape.

It only took me a half-century to finally get around to making the journey.

My original thought — silly me — was to drive the full 800-plus miles of the Great Road over several unhurried weeks beginning in late summer of 2017, stopping to investigate the historic towns and villages along the way, checking out the important battlefields and burying grounds, equal parts listening tour and journalistic inquiry, learning whatever I could about the most important road of

early America. After years of preparation — reading everything from colonial histories to the biographies of Founding Fathers, academic monographs to personal journals, and building a network of experts and contacts along the way — my larger hope was to meet people for whom the Great Road is a living passion and see how the culture of the Great Road had shaped their lives — and mine.

In theory, it was a nice approach. With the exception of one problem.

By my fifth day out, I'd only reached Amish country east of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, just 60 or so miles from the start of my journey in Philadelphia, when I realized something. There was so much unique history and culture arrayed along this pioneer pathway — to say nothing of colorful characters, great local food, quirky hometown events and tacky roadside attractions that appealed to my inner coonskin-capped kid — there was simply no way three weeks could possibly do the old road justice.

wNo less than seven American presidents, after all, were either born on or near the Great Road and at least a dozen key military engagements from our country's two primary wars happened on it — Kings Mountain and Guilford Courthouse during the American Revolution, Antietam and Gettysburg during the Civil War.

After 10 days out in my own vintage "wagon" — a 1996 Buick Roadmaster Grand Estate, the last true station wagon built by Detroit — I rolled home with a full notebook and a revised plan to travel and research the road in segments of three or four days at a time.

If this realistic approach did little to benefit my (neglected) garden, the people I met and stories I heard along the way were nothing shy of eye-opening and even healing at a moment when America at large was bitterly divided over the presidency of Donald J. Trump. For what it's worth, the Great Wagon Road bisected the heart of Trump Country from Pennsylvania to Georgia.

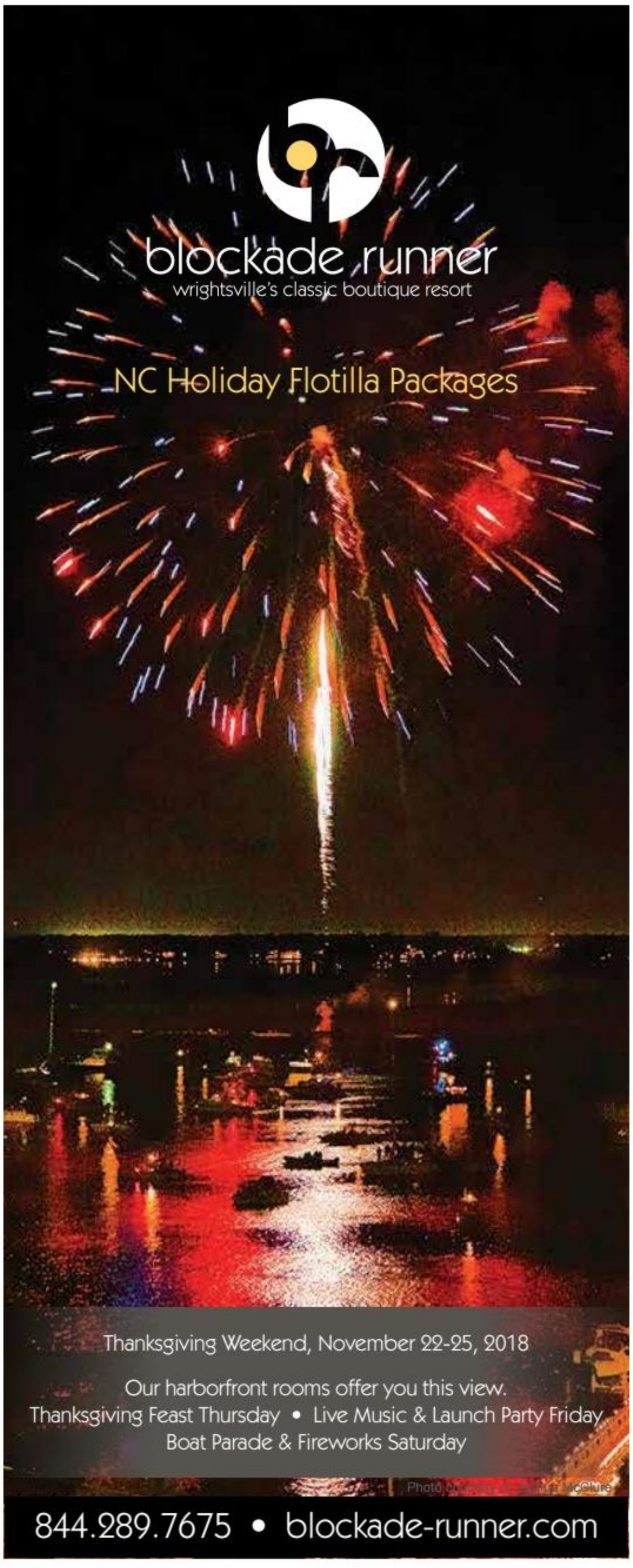
As this October dawns, I've clocked more than 1,200 miles researching the past and present of this great American road and plan to settle in to write my interaction with it over the coming winter months. I just hope I can keep the book under 900 or so pages.

Ironically, this has been a year of dramatic travels along other notable historic and ancient pathways.

In late June, my son Jack married a fellow journalist and beautiful Palestinian gal named Henriette that he met during graduate school at Columbia University. Their wedding was a charming five-day affair in Old Jaffa on the coast of Israel. On the morning of the wedding at an ancient church where legend held that St. Peter received the vision to take Christianity to the wider world, I was tasked with calling upon the Chacar family's 84-year-old patriarch to ask permission for my son to marry his granddaughter.

Tennuce Chacar smiled, grasped my hands and kissed my cheeks. We shared a glass of very fine whiskey over the matter. The party lasted way after midnight.

On our last day in the Middle East, we followed an Israeli archeologist through the crowded streets of old Jerusalem, following the path Christ took, carrying the cross. We also stood at the Wailing Wall and walked the outer walls of the most besieged and contested city in human history. Soldiers and pilgrims were everywhere, armed, respectively, with Uzis and icons. Between us, I felt little in the way of peace in the old city of Jerusalem, a place that seems captive to blood and tears.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Finally, as summer ended, my wife and I joined 60 souls from our Episcopal church for an 80-mile pilgrimage along an ancient road called the Via Francigena, the medieval pathway that connected Canterbury to Rome.

For a week we trekked through the glorious Tuscan countryside, through breathtaking hills of ripening vineyards and olive orchards, through dense forests and sleepy villages, exploring hill towns and ancient abbeys, sharing good wine and great pasta, thunderstorms and theology, sore feet and simple meals and a few unexpected thin moments between earth and sky.

For this sore-footed pilgrim, exploring walled Lucca (where we honeymooned 17 years ago) and Siena with its proud family flags and bustling central piazza was a deeply rewarding experiences. Farther along the pilgrim's path in teeming Roma, I loved seeing the statue of my hero Marcus Aurelius and poking around the ruins of the Pantheon and Cicero's Forum, places I've hungered to see since I was a knee-high to toga.

But on the opposite end of town, quite unexpectedly, I found myself spiritually suffocated by the over-the-top art and power of Vatican City with its soaring heights and monumental treasures, a gilded city on a hill full of tourists, pilgrims, polizia and pickpockets. Thus, I skipped the Sistine Chapel altogether in favor of a quiet compline service at a Greek Orthodox church on a neighboring hill.

In the nick of time, the message seemed to be that it was high time to end my year of traveling ancient roads and turn for home — arriving just as a historic hurricane swept ashore to wreak death and devastation on the Old North State and finish off whatever was left of my unfinished garden.

Looking back, what a curious and unforgettable year it has been. The beauty of any road, ancient or otherwise, is that it takes you somewhere you've never been and provides a useful new perspective.

Old Roads tell fascinating stories, I've been reminded anew.

But being home for a quiet October is a story I never get weary of hearing.

Contact Editor Jim Dodson at jim@thepilot.com.

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Preservation at the Beach

Since its founding in 1939, Preservation North Carolina has been the guardian of the state's architectural heritage. It is also North Carolina's only nonprofit statewide historic preservation group. Each year, the organization travels to a different town or city in the state for its three-day conference, which this year will take place in Wrightsville Beach from Oct. 17 to 19. The roster of events includes a variety of educational activities (lectures by historians and preservationists), tours of historic sites in Wilmington and Wrightsville Beach, honor awards and other special events. The conference is open to anyone interested in old houses and the positive impact of historic preservation. Oct. 17 - 19. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Blvd., Wrightsville Beach. For a conference schedule and registration: presnc.org/conference or call (919) 832- 3652.

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October means exceptional fishing in coastal North Carolina, and anglers of all stripes can participate in the 40th U.S. Open King Mackerel Tournament. More than 400 boats compete for a variety of big-money purses (last year's disbursement for fishermen was more than $270,000). Each boat must have a registered captain, and no more than six lines can be fished from any boat. Admission: Free for spectators. $340 entry fee per boat. Online registration until Oct. 2; on-site registration Oct. 4, 10 a.m. to 12 midnight. Oct. 4 - 6. Southport Marina, 606 West West St., Southport. for info and registration: (910) 457-5787 or usopenkmt.com.

Coast, Roast, Toast…

Bald Head Island's annual Roast and Toast on the Coast returns to the island from Oct. 5 to 7. Friday night's feast will be an oyster roast on the scenic verandah of the Bald Head Island Club. Beginning on Saturday afternoon, Matt Register of Southern Smoke Barbecue will offer a Bald Head-inspired menu at the Common at Cape Fear Station, the island's community park. There will be a silent auction to benefit the Old Baldy Foundation, which maintains the island's lighthouse — the oldest in North Carolina. A Sunday brunch will be served at the Bald Head Island Club. The island is accessible by boat and ferry from Southport, and transportation once on Bald Head is limited to golf carts and bicycles. Oct. 5 - 7. For event tickets and weekend package information: roasttoastcoast.com.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BEN STERN

Fire in the Pines

The Fire in the Pines Festival highlights the importance of controlled forest burning — without them, longleaf pines in the region would disappear, as well as red-cockaded woodpeckers, Venus flytraps, and other rare plants that require fire to survive. A demonstration controlled burn will take place, and in addition to live birds of prey and food trucks, there will be more than 40 exhibitors, among them: the Nature Conservancy, North Carolina Longleaf Coalition, the NC Forest Service, Boy and Girl Scouts of America, and the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust. Admission: Free. Oct. 13, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Halyburton Park, 4099 South 17th St., Wilmington. For info: (910) 341-0075.

Waccamaw Pow Wow

The Waccamaw Siouan tribe called themselves the "People of the Fallen Star," a reference to their home a few miles from Lake Waccamaw, which is believed to have been formed by a massive meteor. With council headquarters near Buckhead, the tribe currently has more than 2,000 members. This year they will celebrate native traditions at the 48th Annual Waccamaw Siouan Pow Wow at the tribal grounds in Bolton, North Carolina.

Events will range from Waccamaw Siouan history, American Indian dance and drumming competitions to a horse show and gospel singing. There will also be workshops in basket making, pottery and American Indian beading techniques. Oct. 19 - 20, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Admission: $5. Waccamaw Siouan Tribal Grounds, 7275 Old Lake Road, Bolton, NC. For more information: (910) 655-8778.

Art in the Arboretum

The Friends of the New Hanover County Arboretum and the Wilmington Art Association combine forces for "Art in the Arboretum," one of the largest juried art shows in North Carolina. More than 120 exhibitors in media ranging from painting and prints to pottery and sculpture will show work outdoors in the 7 acres of gardens. There will also be a raffle and silent auction, as well as People's Choice awards. Admission: $5. Oct. 5- 7, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. New Hanover County Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. For info: (910) 798-7670.

Nature Calls

The Cameron Art Museum features a trip of new exhibitions this month. Renowned South Carolina woodcarver and artist Grainger McKoy's intricately carved birds will be featured in "Recovery in Flight: The Sculptures of Grainger McKoy." In 1995, Dr. Isabel Bittinger presented the Cameron with a collection of antique Japanese woodblock prints bound into albums. One of these was Ando Hiroshige's *Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido*, now on view, which features landscapes and figures in 18th-century Edo and Kyoto. "Nearer to Nature" focuses on artists' works that have been inspired by the natural world. Artists include Elliott Daingerfield, Minnie Evans, Mark Flood, Hiroshi Sueyashi, and others from the permanent collection. All three exhibitions run through Feb. 17. Tickets: $10. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington. For info: (910) 395-5999 or cameronartmuseum.org.

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Every Breath
a novel

By D.G. Martin

Two important new novels are set in North Carolina and in Africa. It is an amazing coincidence because the books' authors live in two different literary worlds.

The first new, Africa-connected book is N.C. State professor Elaine Neil Orr's *Swimming Between Worlds*. She is a highly praised author of literary fiction.

The second is New Bern – based Nicholas Sparks' latest, *Every Breath*, which is being released this month. Sparks' 20 novels have been regulars on *The New York Times* best-seller lists, often at No. 1, making him one of the world's most successful writers of what some call commercial fiction.

What is the difference between literary and commercial fiction? According to *Writer's Digest*, "There aren't any hard and fast definitions for one or the other, but there are some basic differences, and those differences affect how the book is read, packaged, and marketed. Literary fiction is usually more concerned with style and characterization than commercial fiction. Literary fiction is also usually paced more slowly than commercial fiction. Literary fiction usually centers around a timeless, complex theme, and rarely has a pat (or happy) ending. Commercial fiction, on the other hand, is faster paced, with a stronger plot line (more events, higher stakes, more dangerous situations)."

Although both Orr and Sparks would argue that their work cannot be neatly packaged in either genre, the literary/commercial distinction helps prepare readers for the authors' different styles.

In these two books, both authors tell compelling stories and feature interesting and complex characters.

Orr's *Swimming Between Worlds* raises the question of whether there is a connection between the 1950s Nigerian movement for in-

dependence and the civil rights movement in Winston-Salem.

Orr grew up as the child of American missionaries in Nigeria. Her experiences gave a beautiful and true spirit to her first novel, *A Different Sun*, about pre-Civil War Southern missionaries going to black Africa to save souls.

Instead of slaveholding Southerners preaching to Nigerian blacks, the new book contrasts the cultural segregation of 1950s Winston-Salem with the situation in Nigeria. Although Nigerians at that time were coming to a successful end of their struggle for independence from Great Britain, they were still mired in the vestiges of colonial oppression.

Set in these circumstances is a coming-of-age story and a love story. These themes are complicated, and enriched, by the overlay of Nigerian struggles and the civil rights protests in Winston-Salem.

The main male character, Tacker Hart, had been a star high school football player who earned an architectural degree at N.C. State. He was selected for a plum assignment to work in Nigeria on prototype designs for new schools.

Working in Nigeria, this typical Southern white male becomes so captivated by Nigerian culture, religion and ambience that his white supervisors fire him for being "too native" and send him home. Back in Winston-Salem the discouraged and depressed Tacker takes a job in his father's grocery.

The female lead character, Kate Monroe, is the daughter of a Salem College history professor. Her parents are dead, and after graduating from Agnes Scott College, she leaves Atlanta and her longtime boyfriend, James, to return to Winston-Salem and live in the family home where she grew up. She still, however, has feelings for James, an ambitious young doctor.

How Tacker wins Kate from James is the love story that forms the core of this book. But there are complications created by a young African-American college student who is taking time off to help with family in Winston-Salem. Tacker and Kate first meet Gaines on the same day. After Gaines buys a bottle of milk at the Hart grocery

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store, white thugs attack him for being in the wrong place (a white neighborhood) at the wrong time. Later on the same day, Kate spots an African-American man holding a bottle of milk, walking by her home in an upper-class white neighborhood. She thinks he probably stole the milk. She is terrified, and immediately locks her doors and windows. She shakes with worry about the danger of this young black man walking through her neighborhood. The young man is, of course, Gaines.

These themes are complicated, and enriched, by the overlay of Nigerian struggles and the civil rights protests in Winston-Salem.

It turns out that Gaines is the nephew of Tacker's beloved family maid. Tacker and his father hire Gaines to work in the grocery store, and he becomes a model employee.

But Gaines has a secret agenda. He is working with the group of outsiders to organize protest movements at lunch counters in downtown retail stores.

Gaines sets out to entice Tacker to help with the protests, first, only to allow the store to be used at night for a meeting place. Then, over time, Tacker is led to participate in the sit-ins.

In Nigeria, Tacker had found his black colleagues and friends to be just as smart, interesting, and as talented as he was. He found them to be his equals.

Back in Winston-Salem, he has at first slipped back into a comfort level with the segregated and oppressive culture in which he grew up. His protest activities with Gaines put his relationships with his family, Kate and possible employment at an architectural firm at risk.

Tacker's effort to accommodate his growing participation in the civil rights move-

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ment with his heritage of segregation leads to the book's dramatic, tragic and totally surprising ending.

The African connection in Nicholas Sparks' new book is Tru Walls, a white safari guide from Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia. In 1990, the 42-year-old Tru comes to Sunset Beach to meet his biological father. It is his first visit to the United States. On the beach he meets Hope Anderson, a 36-year-old nurse from Raleigh. She is in a long-term relationship with Josh, a self-centered orthopedic surgeon. Nevertheless, she and Tru immediately fall into a deeply passionate love affair.

How Hope resolves her competing feelings for Tru and Josh is the thread that guides the book to a poignant conclusion 24 years later at another North Carolina beach.

In the meantime readers learn from Tru's experiences about the lives of white farm families and the competing claims of the overwhelming black majority in Zimbabwe. Sparks' descriptions of wildlife and the safari experience evoke memories of Ernest Hemingway's African short stories.

Sparks' publishers say that *Every Breath* is in the spirit of *The Notebook*. In both books, the lovers' early encounters involve fiery and youthful passion. Sparks brings them together again years later as older, even infirm, people still deeply in love.

PBS's *Great American Read* has named *The Notebook* one of America's 100 best-loved novels. It's the only book set in North Carolina to make the list. On Oct. 23, PBS will announce the one book selected as America's best-loved novel.

Voting will be open until Oct. 18. You may register your votes for *The Notebook* and for other books on the list. Go to www.pbs.org/the-great-american-read/vote/. For a list of all 100 books, go to www.pbs.org/the-great-american-read/books/#/.

As part of its participation in *The Great American Read* during the first two weeks in October, UNC-TV will air special "North Carolina Bookwatch" interviews with Sparks about *The Notebook* and *Every Breath*.

D.G. Martin hosts "North Carolina Bookwatch," which airs Sundays at noon and Thursdays at 5 p.m. on UNC-TV.

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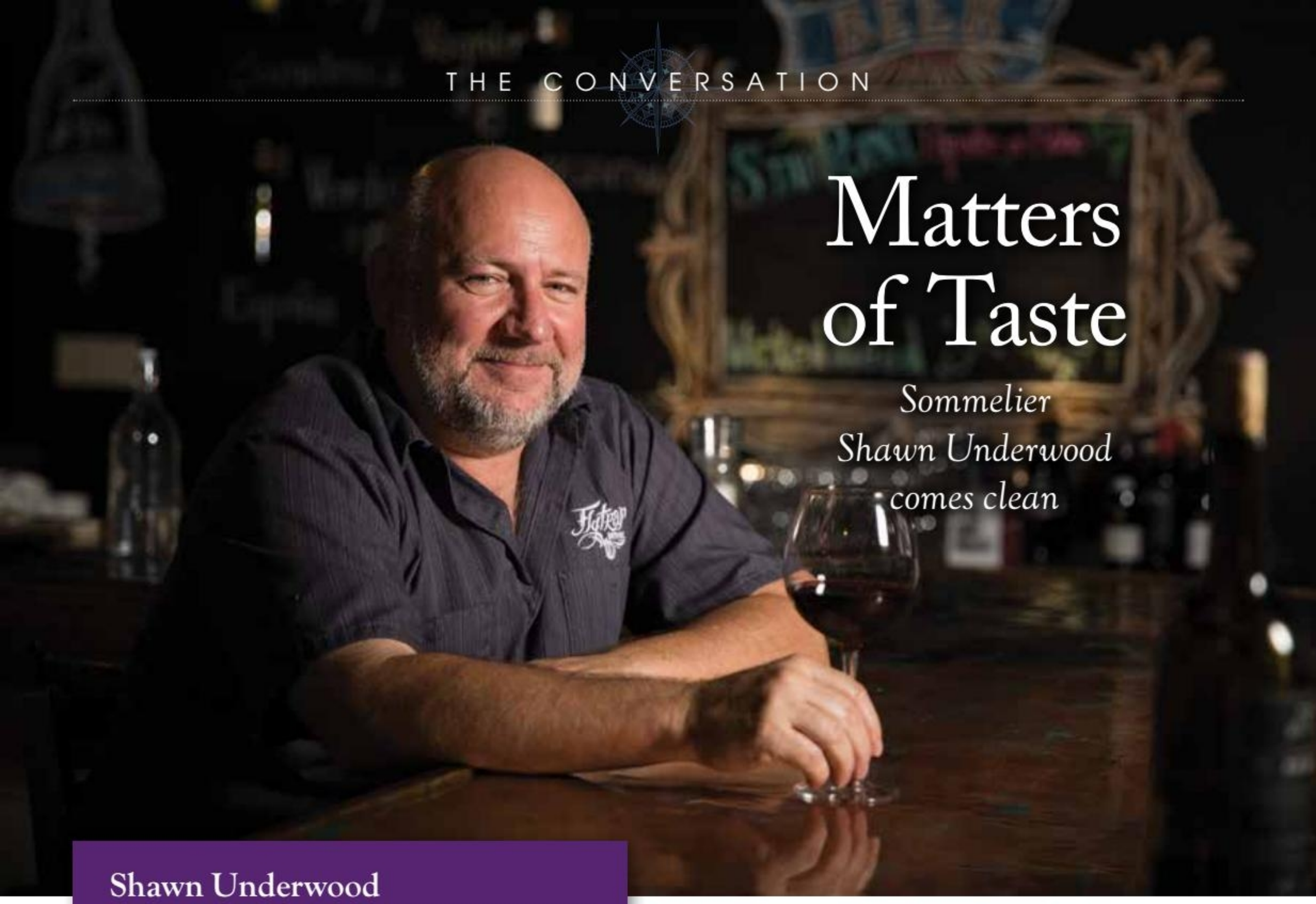
Sommelier Shawn Underwood comes clean



Shawn Underwood

Job: Sommelier and wholesale wine distributor for Country Vintner

First moved to Wilmington: 1989. "I've seen *a lot* of changes."

Favorite spot: Caprice Bistro. "You can be really formal downstairs or really casual upstairs, but either way their food is fantastic. It's classic French cuisine."

By Dana Sachs

What got you hooked on wine?
I went to Cambridge University for a semester when I was in college and went to Paris for the first time. I tasted Chablis and just fell in love with it.

Had you had wine before that?
Yeah, but I'd had junk. I'd had Liebfraumilch and Blue Nun.

Riesling. And variations on different alcohols.

And what was so great about Chablis?
[It] struck me as very refined and elegant, whereas those other wines were just sweet, sugary syrup. Chablis is this beautiful, acidic, mineral-driven wine that's centuries old.

It sounds like wine opened up a world to you.
It was a number of things. It was a cultural experience, because I was drinking it in the park by the Eiffel Tower, eating a fresh baguette and a piece of cheese and it was just the whole culture of France, and really of Europe in general, where wine is *food*. It's part of their everyday culture. It's not just something they drink to get intoxicated. It's a part of their daily experience. It's a cornerstone of that culture. That's what I fell in love with.

College students can often see alcohol as a means to an end.
Not to say I didn't drink more than my share! But it was the cultural aspect that really appealed to me and that still appeals to me.

Do you believe that we can understand a culture better through its wine?

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

Absolutely. And, again, it's not just the wine. It's the food. It's the way that [people] embrace it. When you're in Spain, they have restaurants that are specifically built around wine. The tapas bars. Here, we go out to bars and we drink. [In Spain], there's always food. They're drinking and they're eating some great local dish. When you're in coastal Spain, in Rias Baixas and you're drinking Albariño and you're eating seafood that came out of the ocean literally within a mile of the vineyards, those things are really made for each other. And that's what that whole culture in that little region is based around.

I've also heard you say that we can understand history through wine.

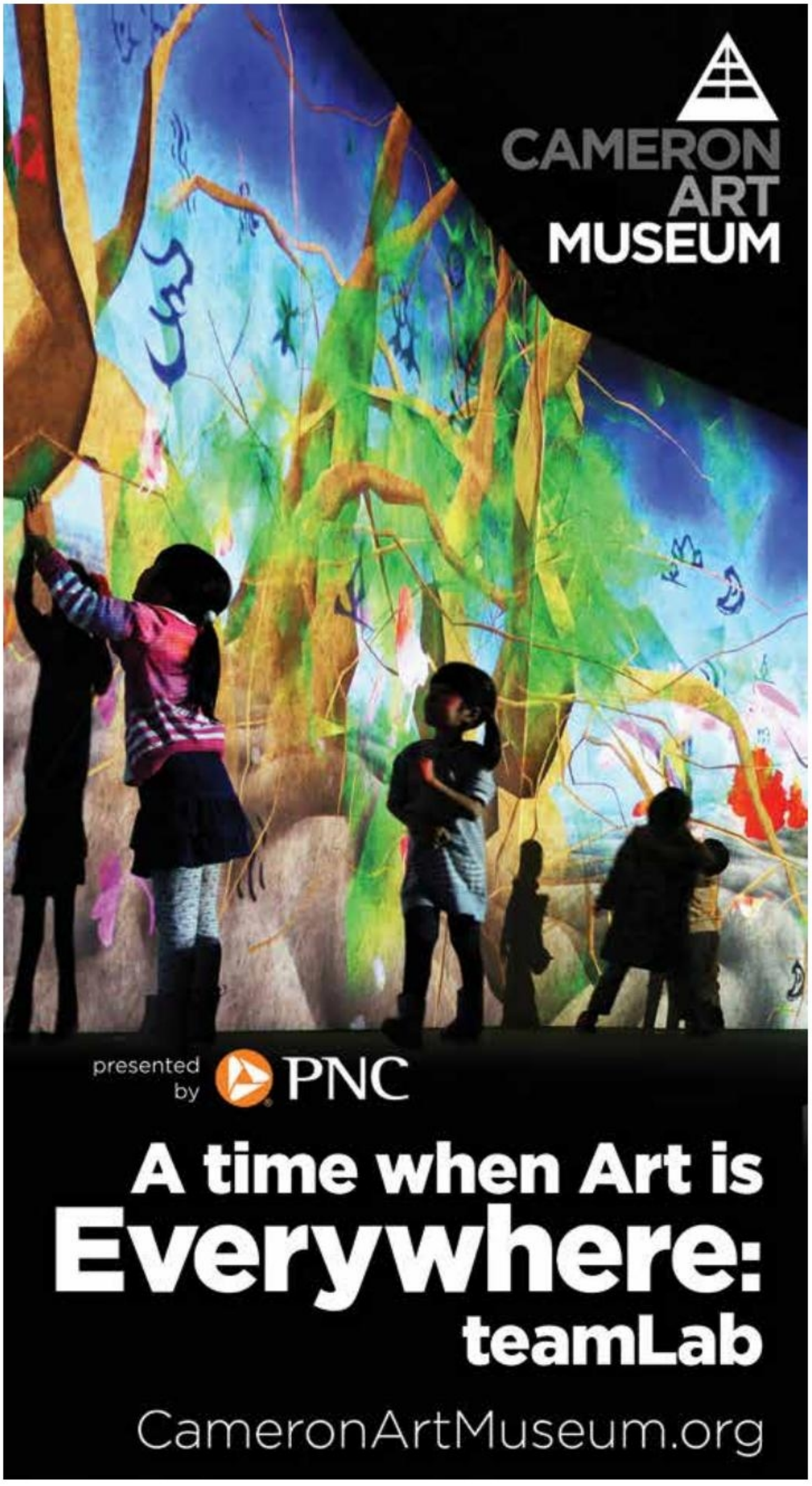
Wine is the culmination of empire, really. It started out in what was the Soviet Union. It moved from there into Eastern Europe and the Middle East. And then the ancient Greeks carried it into the Mediterranean Crescent — Italy, Southern France, Coastal Spain, and Portugal. And then, the Romans. Part of their soldier's pay was in wine, so everywhere they set up a fortress — which was, of course, all over Europe — they planted vineyards.

So, the soldiers could drink all the wine they wanted?

Yeah. It was good for relaxation. It was good for giving them courage for battle. It served a lot of purposes. But [the history of wine is] really the history of empire and expansion. The Spanish brought wine to South America and Southern California. The Dutch took it to South Africa. [Traders] went to the East Indies for spices and various goods and [they] took wine with them and planted vineyards.

I was surprised to learn about wine from Lebanon.

We don't think of the Middle East, and especially Islamic countries [as being wine producers], because they don't drink alcohol, but they do make it and sell it as part of their commerce. Most of this was the result of conquest of lands occupied by non-Muslims, who were already producing and consuming wine.



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THE CONVERSATION

Do you think there's a physical difference in people's ability to taste subtleties in wine? Are some people just more sensitive?

There are a couple of factors. It's true that some people have more acute senses. But part of it is also repetition. When you've tasted 10,000 wines you can start to break down characteristics. But it's also your experience with food, with flowers, with herbs, with all these things that inform your palate. If you've never had a currant, you're not going to use that as a descriptor. If you don't know what violets smell like, you're not going to use that as a descriptor. But the more experience you have with botanicals, with herbs, with different foods, the more your palate's going to be informed to pull those characteristics out of wine.

So discernment might come from someone's interest in learning.

Absolutely.

Here's a recent review of a wine in *Wine Spectator*: "A spicy style, offering vanilla, clove and nutmeg flavors embedded in a creamy texture. Peach and apple notes chime in. Moderately long." What does that tell you?

Well, it tells me that there's oak. Vanilla and baking spices are markers that indicate French oak was used in the winemaking process. So, without even tasting the wine, you know it spent time in a barrel.

An oak cask?

Yes. And the creaminess has to do with the texture, the way it feels in your mouth. And the length of the finish is how long that flavor lingers in your mouth after you've sipped it. [When] you taste some wines, you get a flavor and then it goes away. An inexpensive pinot grigio might just disappear. But that big California chardonnay that spent 12 months in an oak barrel and has a lot of malolactic fermentation — a natural process that converts harsher malic acid to softer lactic acid — it's going to stay with you for a long time.

And that's a good thing?

It depends. That's the thing about wine. It's incredibly subjective. I could taste a wine and say, "It's the best thing," and someone else could say, "I don't really like it."

It seems like some wines become trendy.

Grapes do trend. Merlot was a phase for a while and then [the movie] *Sideways* kind of ruined that. Pinot noir became a phase. And then malbec became a phase. Right now, definitely, a lot of rosé.

Are some wines overrated?

There are wines that people buy based on the name. Dom Perignon champagne. People will buy that and they are buying the name. If someone poured me a glass of Dom Perignon, I wouldn't pour it out. But I don't think it's the best champagne out there, and I don't think it's worth $200.

So, what principles do you recommend that people follow when they're buying wine?

First of all, go to a small, independent retailer. Don't go to a big box store. Don't go to a grocery store. Everyone in this town who has a wine shop tastes those wines. They understand the wines. They know the regions. They're going to help you find the right wine. You don't have to be an expert. You just have to be able to answer a couple of questions that might help them discover what kind of wine you like. That's their job — to help you find the right wine.

What kind of wine town is Wilmington?

Wilmington has a very enthusiastic consumer base. They don't call it New Hangover County for nothing.

What goes well with turkey?

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Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores, online and throughout Wilmington.*

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Well-Behaved Women

Zelda with a twist

By Wiley Cash · Photographs by Mallory Cash

For anyone who knows Therese Anne Fowler, it is no surprise that she writes about women like Zelda Fitzgerald and Alva Vanderbilt, women who were artistic, brilliant, and outspoken. Therese's friends would describe her much the same way. I first met Therese at the South Carolina Book Festival, where we spoke on the same panel in the spring of 2012. We made fast friends, telling stories about book tours and life in North Carolina, where she and her husband, novelist John Kessel, live in Raleigh. I saw Therese several times over the next few months at various conferences and festivals. I knew she had a new book coming out, but she never said much about it. And then *Z: A Novel of Zelda Fitzgerald* was published in March 2013. It blew the doors off every preconceived notion readers had about the woman who had always been known simply as Mrs. F. Scott Fitzgerald. A few months after the novel came out, I saw Therese again at the Southern Festival of Books in Nashville. By that time both *Z* and Therese had experienced incredible success: The novel had appeared on *The New York Times* best-seller list, and a television show based on the novel and starring Christina Ricci as Zelda Fitzgerald was in production at Amazon. I told Therese how thrilled I was for her, and I asked her how it felt. She smiled, turned her head, and revealed the tiny "Z" she had tattooed behind her left ear. She planned to keep Zelda with her forever, and people who have read the novel and have seen the series understand why.

With her new novel, *A Well-Behaved Woman: A Novel of the Vanderbilts* — which tells the story of Alva Vanderbilt, a woman who went from being a member of the

fallen Southern aristocracy to a Gilded Age socialite and, eventually, a leader in the women's suffrage movement — Therese has once again given life to a heroine that readers will not soon forget. It seems that critics feel the same way. *Publishers Weekly* and *Kirkus Reviews* both gave the novel starred reviews, and *People* magazine named it a Best Book of the Fall. Sony Pictures believed in Therese's take on Vanderbilt's life so much that they optioned the novel for a television series before she had even finished writing it.

Over Labor Day weekend I met Therese at The Haymaker in downtown Raleigh to talk about writing about historical women, the thrill of seeing her work on the screen, and how she is feeling about her new book, which is scheduled for release on Oct. 16.

"I'm excited," she says. "But I'm cautious. You can't predict the book business."

We are sitting at a small table by the huge windows where the late-day light barely reaches the high ceiling. On my right, a gorgeous flower mural spans an entire wall. The bar behind Therese features leather-covered stools and industrial lighting. To my left is a sitting area where a comfortable Victorian-styled sofa and leather armchairs invite patrons to sip cocktails and chat. The interior of The Haymaker is the perfect combination of clean lines and lush decadence. When our drinks are delivered, I offer a toast to well-behaved women. Therese laughs and lifts her cocktail, the cachaca/Campari-based Agua-Benta, which is infused with jalapeno and features hints of lime and pineapple, and clinks it against my pint of Peacemaker Pale Ale. She takes a sip and looks around.

"Alva would have been very comfortable in a place like this," she says. "Zelda would have been, too."

"What was it like to see Zelda come to life on the screen?" I ask.

"Wonderful," Therese says. "I loved it, and I think Christina Ricci was perfect. My only regret is that Amazon didn't renew it for a second season. Viewers learned all about the beginning of Zelda's life and her relationship with Scott Fitzgerald, but we never saw them get to Paris, where the writers of the Lost Generation all come together. It would have been fascinating to see that."

"Were you surprised when Hollywood came calling a second time when Sony optioned *A Well-Behaved Woman*?"

"Very surprised," she says. "I was in New York with my agent, pitching the novel to editors and sending the book to auction. We were standing on the subway platform when my agent got a call that Sony wanted to option it. The book was still at auction and hadn't even been purchased yet."

I have a feeling that many people will be hearing about *Alva Vanderbilt* when *A Well-Behaved Woman* is published, some perhaps for the first time. After a life that spanned the Civil War, World War I, the Gilded Age and the Great Depression, Alva Vanderbilt would die in Paris in 1933. Perhaps, if Therese and Sony have their way, both readers and viewers will make it to Paris even though Amazon did not get us there with Zelda. And who knows? The next time I see Therese she might show me a fresh "A" that has been tattooed behind her other ear. You never know what a well-behaved woman is going to do next.

Wiley Cash lives in Wilmington with his wife and their two daughters. His latest novel, The Last Ballad, *is available wherever books are sold.*

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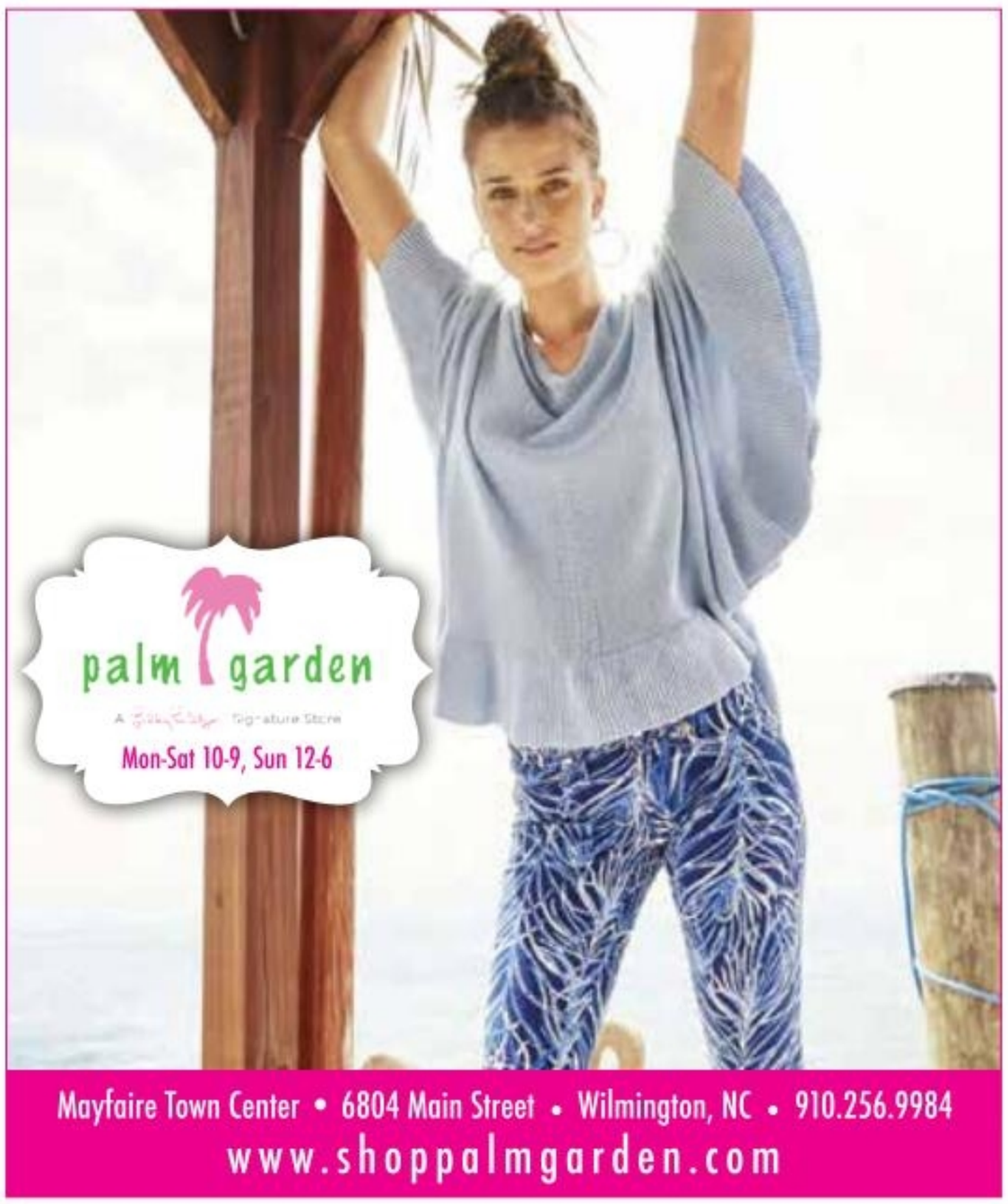
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Let There Be Lights

And lo, it was very good. Until it wasn't

ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY BLAIR

By Rebecca Lanning

IN THE BEGINNING, Dino erected De Laurentiis Studios. For lo, filmmaking was a bust in Hollywood, and producers sought cheaper locations where to maketh their movies, and so it was, upon the sandy loam by the Wilmington airport, that Dino's vision emerged. And it was good.

WHEN DINO COMMANDED, "Prepare ye the way," writers wrote scripts, and carpenters constructed sets, and wardrobe folks sewed ape suits, and a makeup artist crafted a prosthetic ear out of silicone and bits of David Lynch's very own hair. And it was good.

AND WHEN THE DIRECTOR SHOUTETH, "Let there be Lights, Camera, Action," the gaffer set a 5K with a double in it, and the operator switched heads while the dolly grip laid track, and the actress hit her mark — a strip of blue paper tape on the dusty stage floor. And behold! Major motion pictures were born: *Crimes of the Heart, Blue Velvet, King Kong Lives.* There was much rejoicing in the land and on the camera truck. And it was good.

VERILY, local youth fresh out of college began earning $300 a week picking up James Earl Jones from his hotel, arranging cans of soda on the craft service table, and telling everyone to be quiet on the set. Lo, the venerable Andy Griffith returneth to his home state to playeth the role of a hot dog-loving lawyer. And no one could believe this sleepy town, known mostly to surfers and boaters and marine biology majors, now shineth as a beacon of quality film and television productions. And it was ridiculously good.

BEHOLD! The promise of work spread fast throughout the land, and crew members flocketh to the Tar Heel State from hither and yon: New York, California, Michigan, Ohio, Burgaw. They laced up their Timberlands and turned on their Walkies and found great satisfaction in their toilsome labor. And one night when the first assistant director called wrap, Shirley MacLaine climbed aboard the camera truck and taught everyone how to make the perfect martini. And it was, like, amazing.

IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME, teen drama became the craze, and *Dawson's Creek* was born, and the show liveth and reigneth in the Port City for six seasons. On Monday mornings at dawn, the crew would park in the crew lot and ride the shuttle to the location and work 14, 15, 18 hours at a stretch, schlepping gear through the Greenfield gator swamp, breathing in great clouds of dust at the Ideal Cement Factory. Verily, the call time would shift later each day, so by Fridays, the crew would stumble in to work at 4 p.m., eat lunch at midnight, get home on Saturday mornings in time to catch *Sponge Bob* with the kids, because, of course, loin fruit were in the picture by now, and lo, spouses who often felt like single parents — always the one on carpool duty, homework duty, dinner duty, always the one to take the kids trick-or-treating, celebrating milestone birthdays alone, and one day slogging to the gym to squeeze in some me-time and spotting Katie Holmes on the next treadmill, clocking in a 10-minute mile, ponytail swinging. She was 20 years old; the world was her oyster. And it was good. I mean, it was fine, really. It was OK, because, you know, the bills were getting paid, and everyone had health insurance, which is really important. I mean, you gotta have health insurance.

AND IT CAME TO PASS that the wheels on this gravy train started to wobble. Though work could be foundeth here and there, on *One Tree Hill* and *Bolden*, fewer projects came to town. Despite

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a dedicated workforce — folks who'd built their lives here, bought homes and raised families not far from the studios (now called EUE/Screen Gems, by the way) — the state's tax incentives were no longer as alluring. Production companies could maketh their projects for less down in Atlanta. Things were just peachy down there. Studios on every corner. Big stuff poppin'.

SEEING WHAT WAS TO COME, some crew members cut their losses. Everyone's favorite clapper-loader became a behavioral therapist, and a grip started selling medical equipment, and another grip began building Adirondack chairs, and an operator got his M.F.A. and became a film studies professor at the local university, which was totally on the map now.

IT ALSO CAME TO PASS that some crew members could not find alternative work or didn't know what else to do; this was all they'd ever done. They had mortgages and college loans and medical bills to pay, because, you know, insurance coverage wasn't what it used to be. Some uprooteth and moveth to Atlanta or commuteth to Atlanta, paying for their own airfare, food, apartments, Prozac. Others remained in the Port City, taking the work that trickled in, for there would always be someone younger waiting in the wings, eager to clap the sticks or set the dimmer board or bring a croissant to the famous director who showed up to the set 45 minutes late, every day, in his bathrobe. And though the money was not as good, it wasn't just about the money.

I mean, IN THE BEGINNING, it was about the money, the money and the glamour and of course the Coronas on the camera truck, but it had come to be about something else too. Camaraderie. Cooking chicken paprikash with Vilmos Zsigmond. Making something out of nothing. Venturing into the dark and formless void and creating a whole new world.

Rebecca Lanning lived in Wilmington from 1994 to 2008 and now makes her home in Chapel Hill with her husband, a cameraman. Her work has appeared in many publications, including Salon, The Washington Post *and* The New York Times.

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Where We Stand

(Stiff upper lip optional)

What, precisely, does Wilmington stand for?

That has been my question these past few months as I wander this town named for me, along with the surrounding coastal Carolina environs.

There's the rich history, answered Cricket Stubbs at the Visitor Information Center on the Riverwalk. Yes, it's an early English port city that may well have been the first to rebel against my crown and country during the tax stamp scuffle that predated the Boston Tea Party. (It's rather ironic that the Coast Guard ship that has been long stationed here — the *Diligence* — bears the same name as the British ship that triggered that mini-revolt of 1766.)

Of course the area played a fierce role in the Civil War, Cricket added.

And, upon my word, after! The historic — and unpunished — Wilmington insurrection and racial massacre of 1898 that overthrew the postwar government here is called the only successful *coup d'etat* in U.S. history.

Yes, there are the many historic and beautiful homes and buildings that tell the stories of the merchants, politicians, developers, doctors, educators and dreamers who shaped this town during its many incarnations:

Port town, slave town, rice, cotton, lumber and molasses town, sleazy river town, streetcars-to-the-beach tourist town, railroad town, ghost town (after the railroad left), college town and now boomtown, with new residents and retirees absolutely flooding this area, sure of its beauty but perhaps, like me, unsure of its heart.

There are only a few statues — one on South Third honoring fallen Confederate soldiers (like so many Southern towns); and one on Market Street for the local senator George Davis, attorney general for the Confederate States with an upflung arm of questionable tailoring. There's a nice monument to the area's WWI casualties at New Hanover High School and that smashing (sometimes literally) fountain of the Kenan family at Fifth and Market, along with a host of historical markers of many flavors.

But what is Wilmington, really? What do we stand for? (As I liked to tell members of Parliament when I was speaker of the House of Commons 300 years ago, "Stand for something or remain seated.")

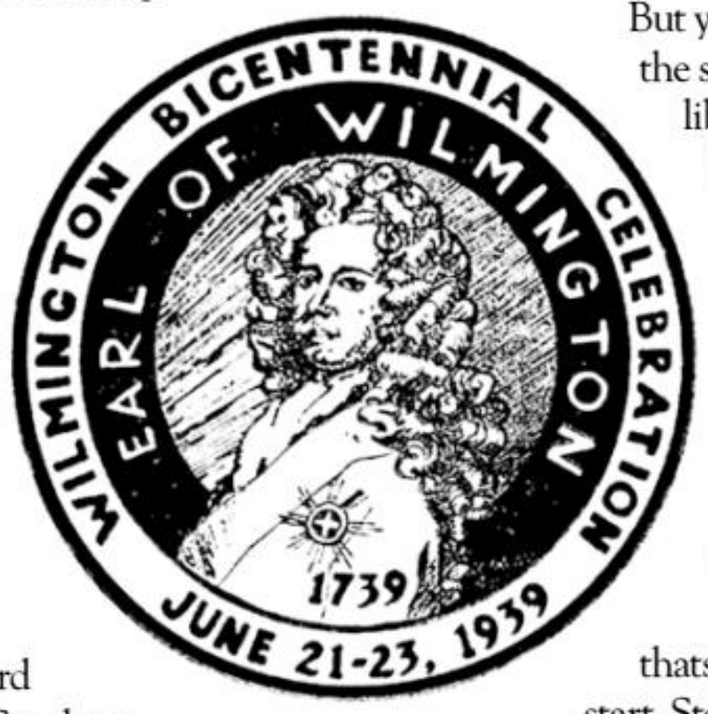
"Well," Cricket mused when I pressed her on this, "it was named for Lord Wilmington in England."

Aha! But who was he? Cricket, smartly togged in summer colors and bright lipstick, could only smile, because she, like virtually all of this area's inhabitants, knows not one whit about Spencer Compton, the Earl of Wilmington, England's second prime minister and likely the most fashionable man in British government at the time.

It wasn't always like this. During Wilmington's Bicentennial Celebration, held at the Federal Center on Princess Street in 1939, my oil portrait and letters made up the first exhibit among many others, including historic paintings, maps, drawings, photographs and other artifacts, such as the gavel made from the Dram Tree.

There was also the Spencer Compton Society here, but it's my understanding it devolved into an excuse to add some pomp to cocktail hour before it collapsed due to a lack of interest. That last — a lack of interest — is how much of history has unkindly portrayed me: a lax, ponderous leader, the most ordinary of orators, a perfumed fop and a dullard — but only because I preferred not to engage in the the loud braying and spittle-spraying in the House of Commons.

Verily, I was a terrible leader. I hated the pressure, the volume, the mess of it.



But your Lord Wilmington worked tirelessly behind the scenes with both the Whigs and Tories (today's liberals and conservatives) to make Britain's vast holdings and Colonies — including this town — work successfully. Remember how our tiny island nation reached all around the world?

It was a complex maze of holdings, shipping nightmares, peerages, uprisings, epidemics, scoundrels and whatnot that required a stiff upper lip to control. And none was as stiff as mine (as my critics used to say while denouncing my oration).

If you would like your city to stand for the things thats its namesake stood for, a stiff upper lip is a good start. Steady at the helm, plan carefully and smartly, take care of the details now that the future will require, such as roads, bridges, sewers, schools and parks. These jobs must be done for the health of the realm, without fail and no whining. As I always liked to say, excuses are only patches on the garment of failure.

I also stood squarely for bipartisanship, which was why both the Whigs and Tories could agree upon me — even if only to jointly and enviously mock my brocaded scarlet jacket with gold trim.

Let those who can get the jobs done do the jobs of governance. Fairness and honesty before party! North Carolina's greatest governor, Gabriel Johnston — the man who moved this city from Brunswick Town and named it after me — learned this at my stockinged knee in my London manse. There should definitely be a statue to this grand man of vision and fairness.

What else should be Wilmington's cachet?

Some Southern cities are known for their water feature or sculpture themes (and we have some fine ones, including the Riverwalk and its pelican, owl and Venus flytrap sculptures), but why not cultivate Wilmington as the best-dressed city in the South, in honor of your dashing royal patron? Imagine each day and evening as a fashion show, including hats without bills and shoes with heels. To repeat the advice of my impeccably attired mother, Mary Noel, "If it's worth doing, it's worth getting dressed up for."

As I wrote in my last outing for this very well turned-out magazine, Spencer Compton also encouraged gardening for beauty and mental health in all of our Colonies. Why not makes this entire city a shining example of what the wonderful Joe Pawlik has done in his neighborhood at S. 2nd Street at Ann? Please go by and see the difference careful, loving gardening can make. As the always crisply dressed Sir Joe (yes, he should be knighted) likes to say, it's harder to be ugly in a city that's pretty.

Lastly, why not make Wilmington a sister city to England's London and Warwickshire, my two hometowns?

Both nations are feeling a little lost right now. We could reclaim the relationship we had back when my man Gabriel Johnston shaped this land and perhaps show the way for reunification, maybe even get the Queen or Duchess Kate to visit.

It seems pompous for me to have to say this, but I was a man of wealth, influence and style in my day. Just look at my image on the cover of the bicentennial program, complete with my rare Order of the Garter medal. Many have copied that style, including fellow Britisher Mick Jagger. As I embrace my new life here in shorts and collarless shirts — I've even gone barefoot — I often wonder why there are no stylish Spencer Compton T-shirts, caps and mugs with my favorite sayings and bon mots, instead of just the usual tributes to sea life, pirates and being salt-treated. How about a Lord Wilmington beer or wine? (A glass of port at the Kit-Cat Club, where my famous portrait was painted.)

A certain past can certainly help shape an uncertain future. Why not capitalize on the quiet, cool, capable and well-coifed reputation of your namesake as Wilmington writes its next chapter as the new sweet spot in the South? — *Spencer Compton*

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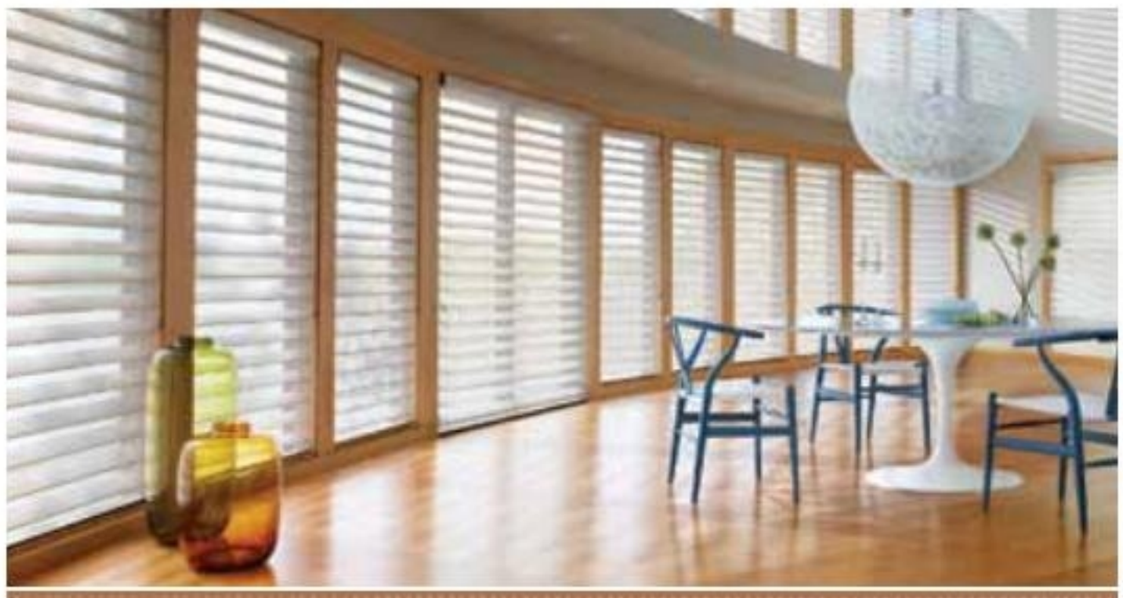

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Baltimore Oriole

With luck and good food, they may return to your backyard feeder this winter

By Susan Campbell

Northerners who relocate to the North Carolina coast often ask me about birds familiar to them that seem absent here in our fair state. One that is close to the top of the list is the Baltimore oriole. Its striking plumage and affinity for sweet feeder offerings make it a real favorite among backyard bird lovers.

Male Baltimore orioles are unmistakable with bright orange underparts, a black back and head, as well as two bold white wing bars. Females and immature birds are yellow to light orange with the same white wing bars. They have relatively large yet pointed bills that are very versatile while foraging. Males sing a very melodic song made up of several clear whistled notes.

As it turns out, Baltimore orioles actually do nest in North Carolina — if you venture far enough west. In our mountains they can be found weaving their elaborate nests that dangle from high branches, often over water. Following two weeks of incubation, the young will spend another two weeks before they fledge. By midsummer the adults will spend their days in the treetops, looking for caterpillars and small insects to feed their growing families.

However, since these birds winter throughout Florida and all the way down into Central America, you certainly might spot a few as they pass through in spring or fall. But there is also a chance one or two might spend the winter in your neighborhood if you have the kind of habitat they seek out in the cooler months. Should your yard be to their liking, they may return year after year, bringing others (presumably family members) with them. I know winter oriole hosts in the eastern half of the state who count a dozen or more birds frequenting their feeders from October through March every year. Several of these hosts are right here in the Wilmington area.

Baltimore orioles will seek out areas with lots of mature evergreen trees and shrubs of which a significant portion bear some sort of fruit. These birds are relatively large and colorful so require thick cover for protection from predators — especially fast-flying bird hawks such as Cooper's and sharp-shinneds. Without this, it has been my experience that they will not linger long even if food is plentiful. But should they feel safe, the odds are they will settle in and become a regular backyard fixture. Baltimore orioles will continue to consume any insects they happen upon but will switch to a diet of berries and whatever fruit or sweet treats they find at bird feeders. They are known to enjoy not only suet mixes with peanut butter, but also orange halves, grape jelly and even marshmallows. Also, they will avail themselves of sugar water from hummingbird feeders they find still hanging. I suspect this is why more of these birds have been reported in recent years — since more folks are feeding wintering Ruby-throateds every year. There are special larger sugar-water feeders made for orioles that usually contain partitions for placing other solid treats as well. Baltimore orioles definitely enjoy mealworms too, should your budget allow.

Interestingly, a few very lucky individuals have been treated to out-of-place Scott's oriole as well as Bullock's here in North Carolina. Furthermore, these mega-rarities have turned up at sites without any other orioles present. Keep in mind that we also do find Western tanagers at feeders in winter sometimes, more so along the coast than inland. The females and immature birds of this species look very similar to female or immature Baltimore orioles, differing only in the shape of their bills and the color of their wing bars.

Many people do not realize that orchard orioles can be found here in place of Baltimores during the summer months. Their plumage is less striking, nests are less complex but their songs are almost as sweet. But that is a story for another day . . . .

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos. She can be contacted at susan@ncaves.com.

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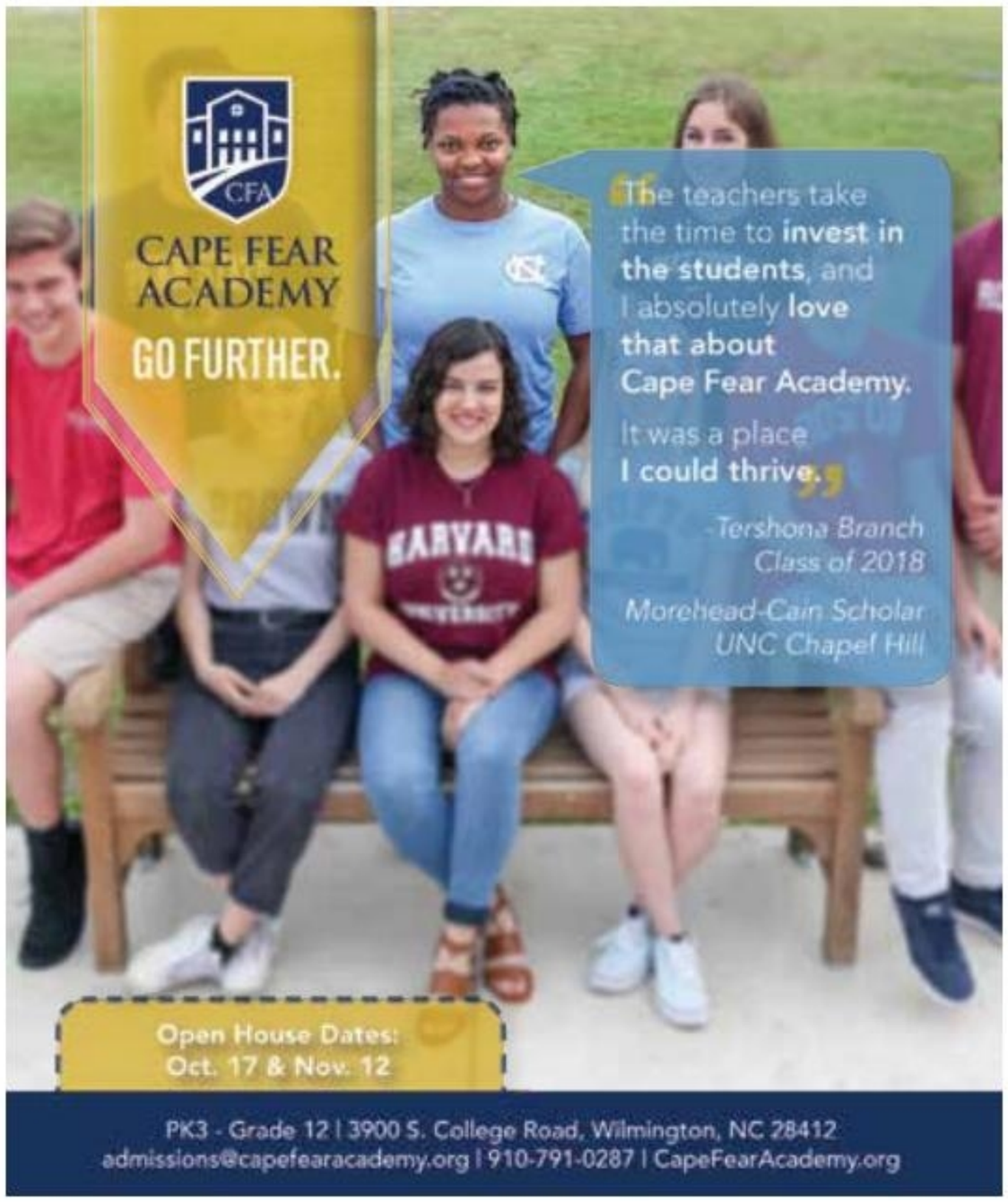
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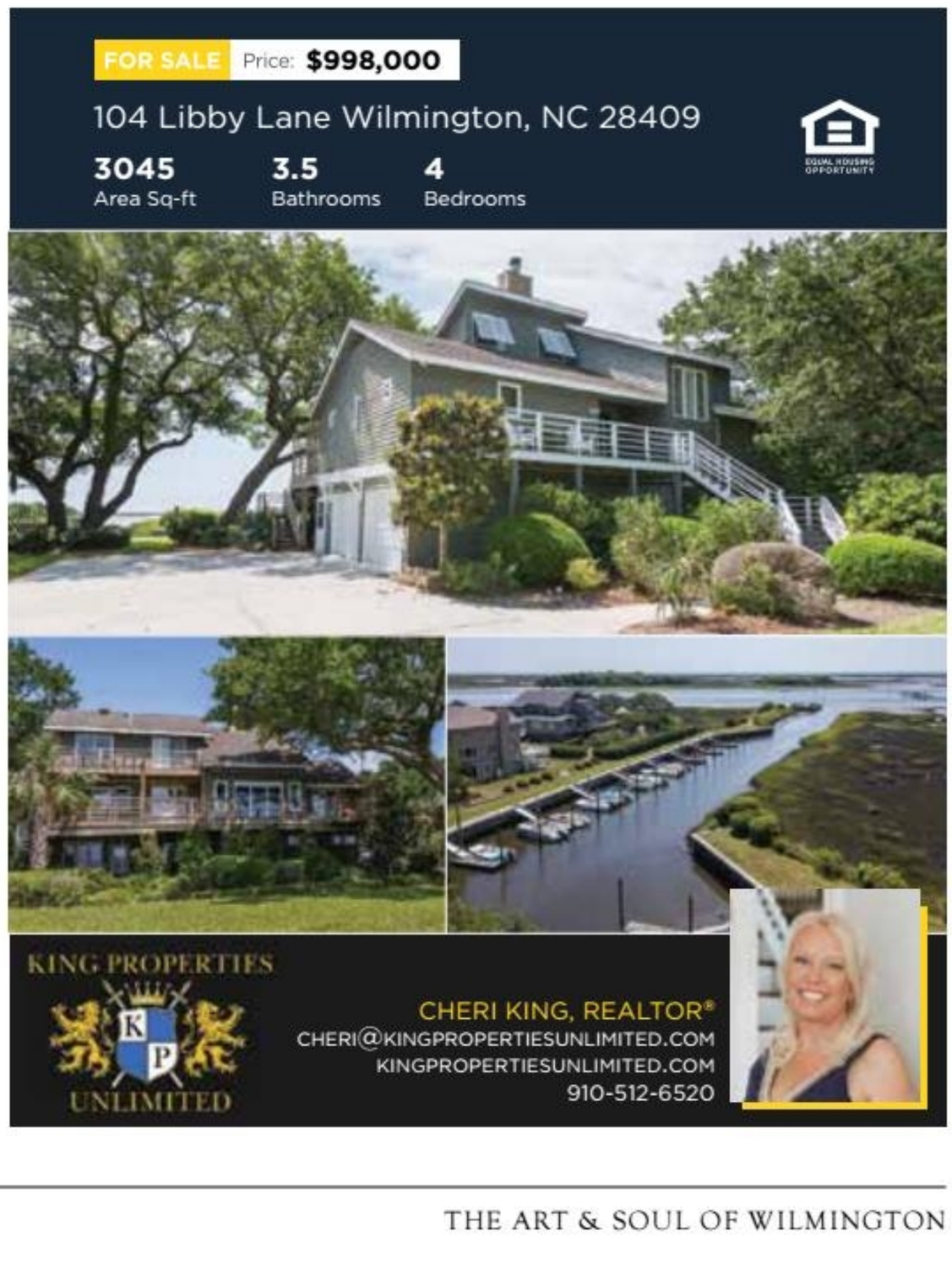


Hickory Nut Falls

The wind says, Breathe into the sting,
but the mind anticipates the hive.
Each day bears a lesson.

In my room, where the dry leaves know the secret to eternal life
and the acorn shows me how to stand tall, I search for the gorge,
cool patches of earth like open mouth kisses.
There is no separation.

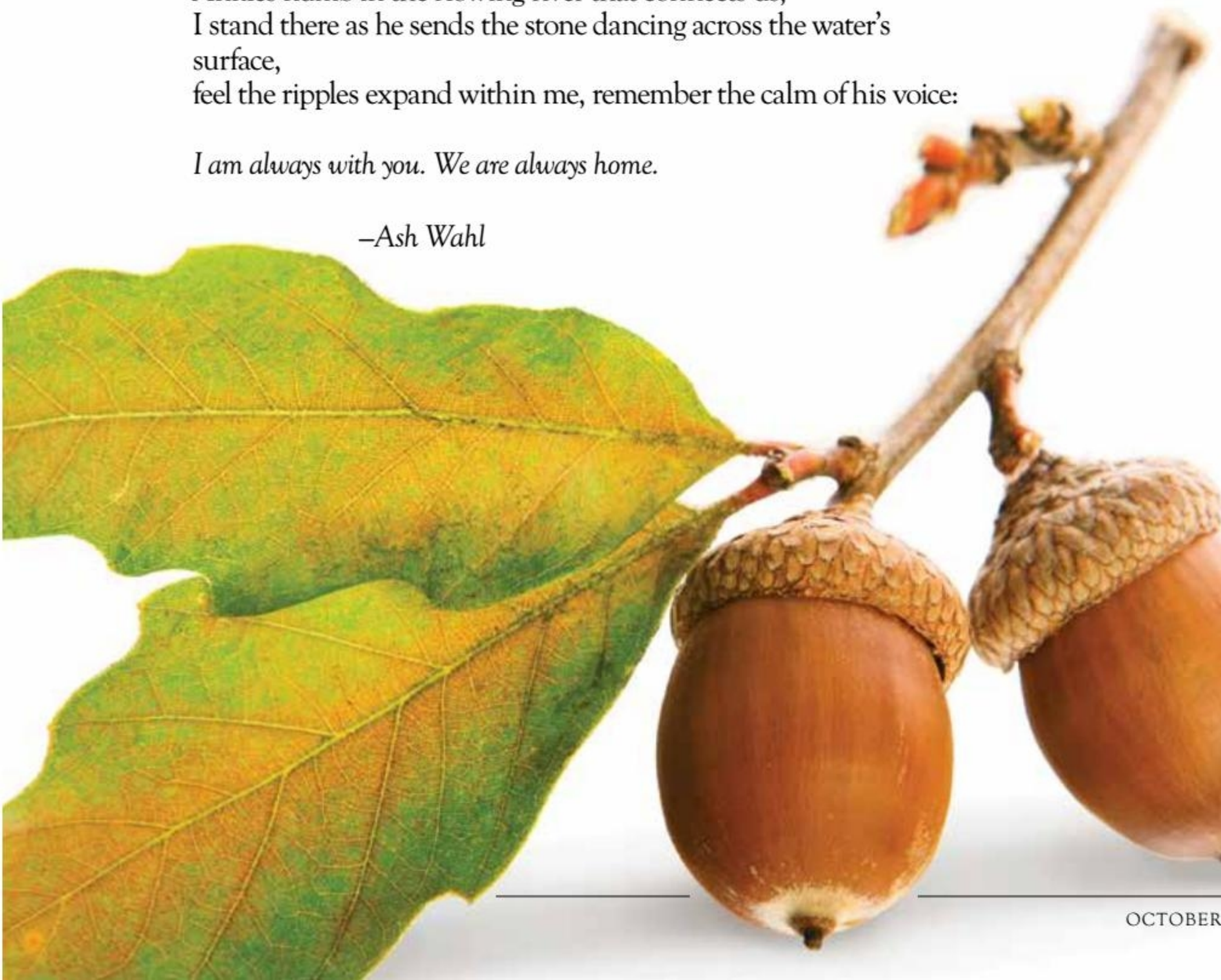
Papa used prayer, sat in his threadbare chair,
each labored breath a short infinity; each day a gift.

At the water's edge, I see him as a young man,
feet bare, toes crooked like mine,
working a smooth stone between his fingers
like a talisman to a timeless space.

Ankles numb in the flowing river that connects us,
I stand there as he sends the stone dancing across the water's
surface,
feel the ripples expand within me, remember the calm of his voice:

I am always with you. We are always home.

–Ash Wahl



Rewriting History

Myrick Howard and Preservation North Carolina deliver new life to old buildings

By J. Michael Welton

For more than 40 years, Myrick Howard has dedicated his life to the preservation of North Carolina's architectural heritage.

It's an exceptional cultural contribution to the state, matched probably only by curator and historian Catherine Bishir, the author of *North Carolina Architecture*, her encyclopedic catalog of design. Between the two of them, Howard and Bishir have created an elevated atmosphere for appreciating the role architecture plays in the lives of all North Carolinians.

Howard has done that by placing himself squarely on the front lines of historic preservation. He prepped himself for his career by attending UNC-Chapel Hill, with a double major in law and urban planning. When he graduated in 1978, he headed straight for the organization now known as Preservation North Carolina. "I took a part-time job first, and within another month or so, I was executive director," the Durham native says.

It's the only job he's ever had. When he arrived, PNC was a one-person shop in Raleigh. Today it stretches across the state, with 12 full-time employees in offices in Raleigh, Greenville, Durham and Shelby, and a number of part-time employees in Wilmington.

All the while, PNC has earned consistently high marks on the national stage. "Preservation North Carolina is the envy of the country," says Raleigh architect Frank Harmon. "Even Virginia doesn't have anything like it. He's extraordinary."

Howard is also modest as he goes about the business of saving our historic buildings. "It's a matter of principle that the organization is not about him, but about the preservation of North Carolina," Harmon says. "There's this incredibly valuable history of his work, and this very creative genius about it."

His background in law provides dual benefits. Clearly it's influenced his organizational abilities. But it also informs his contention that preservation is mostly about real estate. "Not a day goes by without my looking at a contract," says Howard. "It's

a way to get to the point — a way of thinking, where you get rid of the extraneous thoughts."

PNC — he calls the organization an "animal shelter for historic buildings" — favors action over talk. "We try to find people to take over these buildings," says Howard. "We've done over 800 with direct connections, and there are hundreds of others that we've helped out over the years."

Howard was instrumental in developing PNC's formula for success. He inherited a revolving fund for the acquisition of properties from an earlier organization, then expanded its use. He matches up potential owners or developers with projects, and motivates them with the application of state and federal historic tax credits. Uses of the renovated buildings often create jobs, while enhancing tax bases with historic properties used in new ways.

It's a process that requires vision, patience and expertise in connecting the dots of who should be involved with each project. "His mental Rolodex is very deep," says landscape architect Rodney Swink, a senior associate at PlaceEconomics who's known Howard for more than 30 years. "And he has the ability to suggest a number of possibilities for a building."

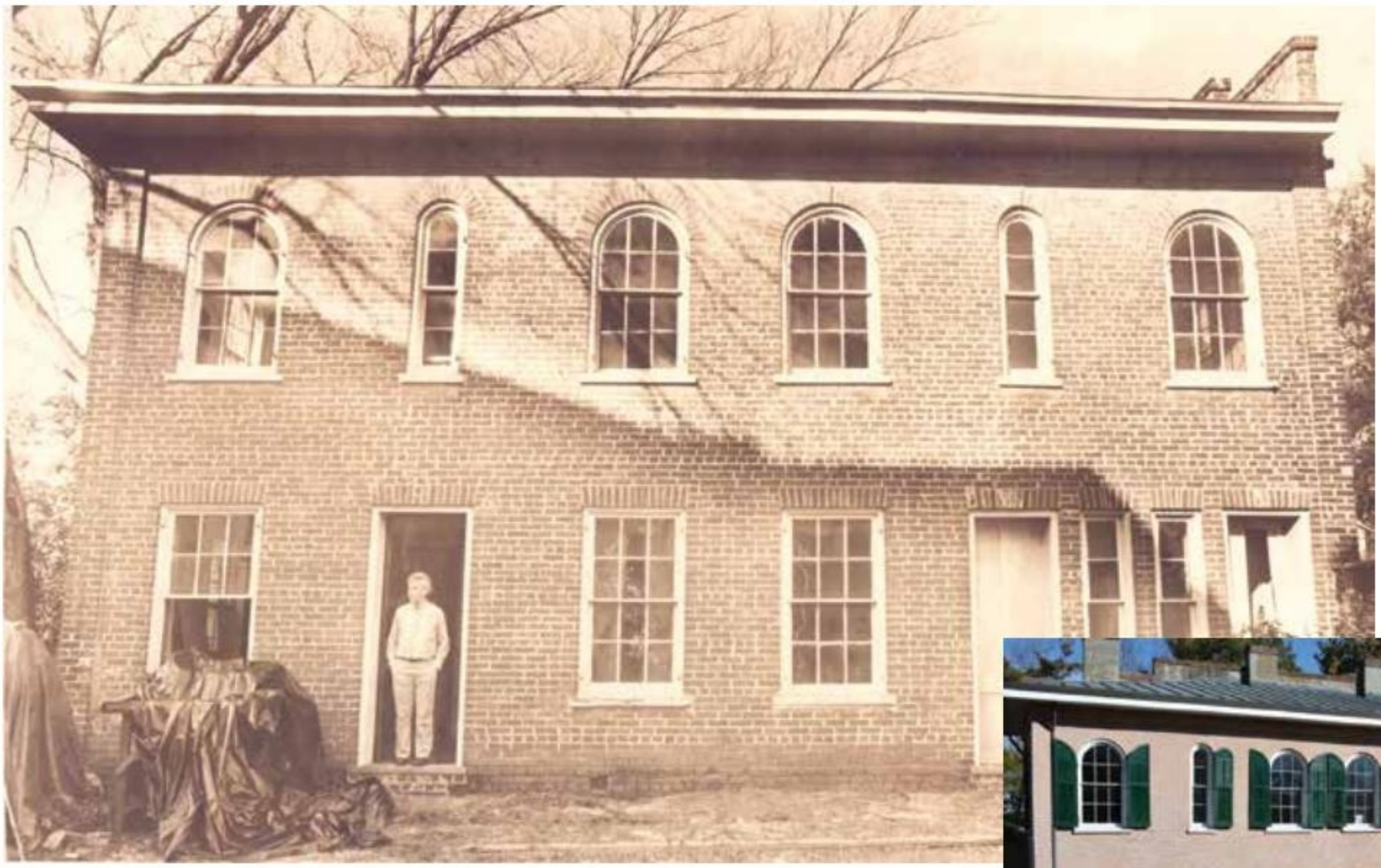
"He's an innovative leader on how to get preservation done," says Ellen Turco, chair of the Wake Forest Historic Preservation Commission. "The old model was to create a nonprofit to save buildings, raise money locally and turn the building into a museum. But every building with value can't be a museum — so how can it be a hotel, a restaurant or a living space?"

Turco cites a number of projects Howard's been involved with, both big and small. "There's Loray Mill in Gastonia — it's the largest in the state and the South," she says. "And he's just as impactful in smaller communities as larger ones — there's Proximity Mill in Greensboro, Edenton Cotton Mill, and Rocky Mount Mills."

The one structure that Howard and PNC did save and convert into a museum is the antebellum Bellamy Mansion in Wilmington. And for good reason: The building is a one-of-a-kind symbol of North Carolina's rich, diverse and volatile history — and a centerpiece in historic downtown Wilmington.

"Of all the buildings PNC has done, it's the only one they kept," says Gareth Evans, executive director of the Bellamy Mansion Museum of Historic Design and Art. "They call it a stewardship property: They didn't revolve it through, but remained its owners and managers."

What's significant about the Bellamy is that it delves deep into social issues. Built during the Civil War in what was then North Carolina's largest and wealthiest city — Wilmington was a thriving port, after all — Bellamy was a town home for a plantation-owning family, with slave quarters on-site.



Myrick Howard in 1993 contemplating the future of the Bellamy slave quarters renovation.

Right: Bellamy slave quarters today

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM MYRICK HOWARD

Wilmington-based architects designed it, and slaves and freedmen built it, which broadens its appeal to a wide base of visitors. "It connects people to history and the community," Howard says. "It's a huge asset — 30,000 people go through it every year, and there's programming of significance. It's inclusive and tells the full story of the site of the (1898) Wilmington Race Riot. It was talking about that well before it was comfortable to do that. It talks bluntly about slavery and what it meant."

After the Civil War, the mansion became home to the Freedmen's Bureau, while Wilmington's thriving black middle class began to grow and prosper. In 1896, the United States Supreme Court ruling in Plessey versus Ferguson validated the concept of "separate but equal." It was a step that encouraged the establishment of Jim Crow — and much more.

On Nov. 10, 1898, in Wilmington, an angry mob of about 500 whites marched on the African-American *Daily Record*, burned its building and destroyed its presses. They roamed the city, terrifying black neighborhoods as their inhabitants fled. Much of the action took place within two blocks of the Bellamy.

For the next three-quarters of a century, whites ruled not just the local government in Wilmington, but most of the South. "The Wilmington Race Riot basically set it up, and white power took over," says Howard. "The message was that you can close down voting and kick out African-American officeholders and nobody will tell you otherwise."

The day before the 1898 riot, owner John D. Bellamy had gone to Congress to retrieve his family home from the Freedmen's Bureau. He succeeded, and his descendants would live in the home until the late 1940s. In 1993, PNC took title to the Greek Revival house and initiated its restoration, following up on the former slave quarters in the 2010s.

Howard calls the Bellamy a major success, with PNC raising more than $2 million for it, excluding operating funds. Beyond renovation, they've made overt efforts toward mending social fences. "We tried with Bellamy to do things to get both whites and people of color into the same place to communicate and to get to know each other," Howard says. "There was an opportunity to do that with the full restoration of the slave quarters. We did this early on, and it's an important part of what we do."

He's quick to give credit to the Historic Wilmington Foundation for their early preservation efforts before PNC arrived there, though there's still much left to do. "There are neighborhoods there that could use more investment, with a substantial African-American community there," he says.

In Raleigh's historic Oakwood neighborhood in 2014, Howard publicly exercised his judgment and influence in different ways. As he did, he helped define the evolving nature of 21st century historic preservation.

It was a situation steeped in controversy. Architect Louis Cherry and his wife, N.C. State film professor Marsha Gordon, had designed and begun to build an updated, Craftsman-style home on a small Oakwood lot. A neighbor across the street questioned its appropriateness for a community full of 19th and 20th century residences.

And she did it in the most public of ways, appealing the Raleigh Historic Development District's approval of the design to the city's Board of Adjustments, which overturned the RHDD's decision. That launched a three-year public imbroglio.

"The opposition was saying this 'modern' house was destroying the neighborhood — with cold and cruel and weird rhetoric," says Gordon. "They were using 'modern' as a bad word to characterize an architectural style."

The neighbor met with some success, managing to have the half-finished home's construction permits revoked and threatening it with demolition. "The opposition said it threatened the historic nature of the neighborhood, and that it would lose its historic district status and designation," says Gordon.

Howard would write Oakwood residents a letter with his thoughts on historic architecture and modernism, on Feb. 22, 2014:

"I believe that the design of the Cherry/Gordon home is in line with a half-century of preservation philosophy and practice, contrary to the assertions of their opponents," he wrote.

"Most of Raleigh's historic districts were built over a period of decades — house-by-house, owner-by-owner. Thus, unlike modern subdivisions, they contain numerous styles and sizes, and it is this richness that gives them their character. They are mosaics, made up of many distinctive parts. No one style predominates, so it is not useful to prescribe stylistic limitations."

On Aug. 28, he wrote to *The News & Observer* in Raleigh:

"If we look up the characteristics of modernist style, the new Oakwood house really isn't modernist. Yes, it's 'modern.' It's 'contemporary.' But 'modernist'? No. The house is more akin to buildings built in the early to mid 20th century than it is to 'modernism.' That helps make it fit into the historic district."

Howard had modulated the controversy for public consumption. "He was using the crisis as a teaching moment for a well-accepted way that historic preservation was understood by the National Park Service, the current best thinking in the historic preservation community," says Cherry. "The result was wide public pressure on the city to join with us in our legal situation. He was absolutely critical in our defense."

In February 2016, the North Carolina Court of Appeals found that the neighbor had no legal standing, and ruled in favor of Cherry and Gordon. In March, their neighbor appealed to the state Supreme Court, which declined to rule on the case in August. Cherry and Gordon live happily in their home today, thanks in part to Howard.

Ask Howard about his most important achievement at PNC, and he's quick to bring up the topic of state historic tax credits, which have been used on more than $2 billion in property. PNC established them first in 1993, reinstated them in 1997 and later expanded them from residences to industrial and utility buildings. "That's how all these mills are being renovated," he says. "We were the ones who testified and wrote the original language. They've gone way beyond what we remotely imagined when we got this started."

Louis Cherry / Marsha Gordon house in Raleigh's historic Oakwood neighborhood.

When the General Assembly abolished them in 2015, Howard initiated a plan to reinstate them in 2016 — and succeeded. "Myrick has had to re-educate a whole new group over and over, that they're not only to benefit the wealthy, but have had as big an impact on small and middle-size businesses as anything the legislature has ever done," says Steve Schuster, principal in Raleigh's Clearscapes. "The economic development they spur has a profound impact across the state."

The underlying lesson of historic tax credits is that they're not just about preserving old or historic buildings — though certainly they achieve that — but that they're effective economic development tools for big cities and small towns alike. And Howard is their most effective advocate at the legislature. "He's been willing to plow that same field repeatedly," says Schuster.

The harvest has benefited every region of North Carolina, from the mountains to the ocean. "A lot of buildings are still there, because of his leadership," says Catherine Bishir. "An awful lot of buildings and even communities were rescued, and without PNC, I don't think would have happened."

There are more to come. "There are plenty of projects I'm in the middle of right now," says Howard. "I enjoy the work, and I plan to stick around a while longer."

That's something sure to accrue to the benefit of every North Carolinian who cares about history, architecture — and healthy local economies.

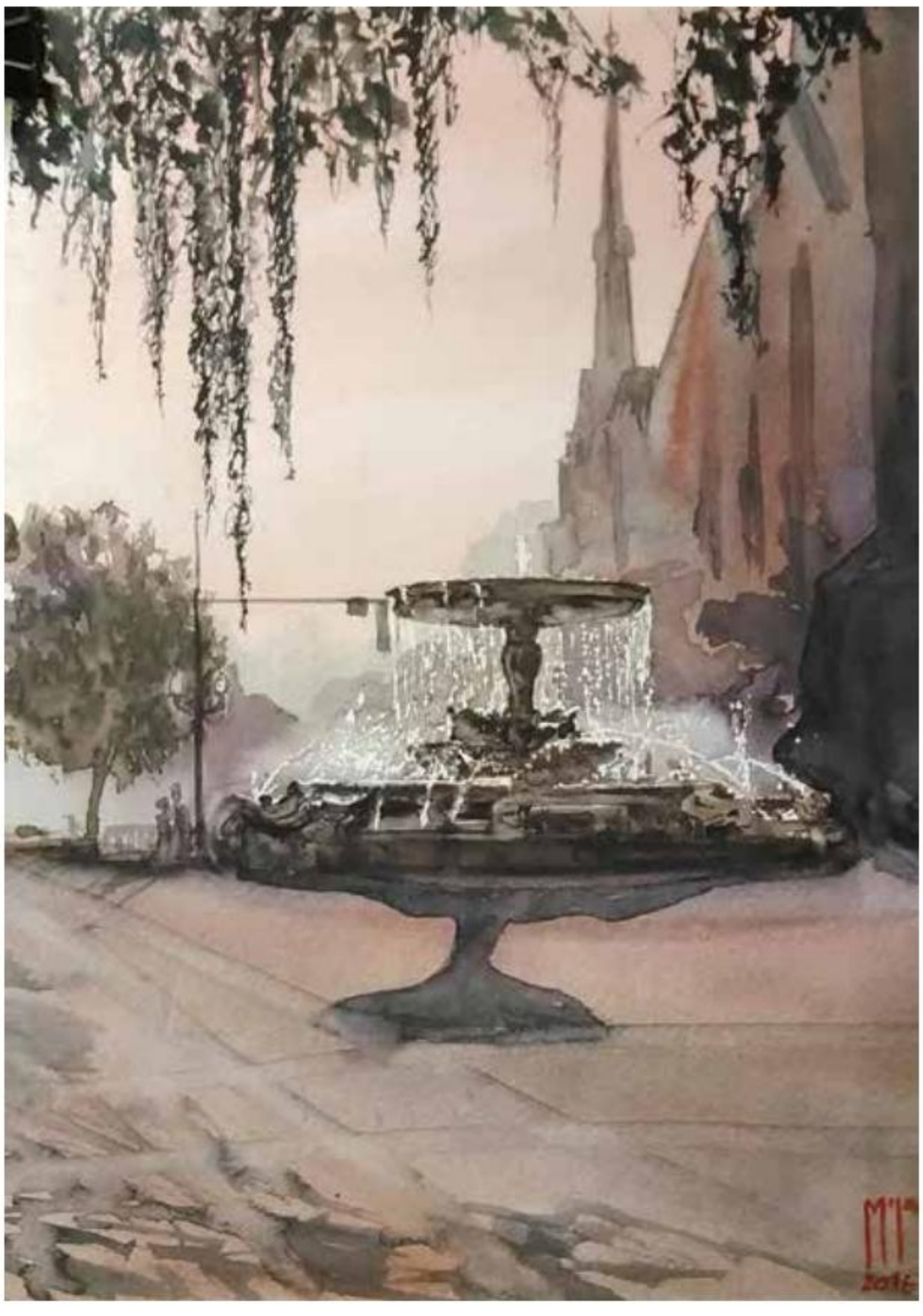
Preservation North Carolina's annual conference will be held from October 17- 19 in Wrightsville Beach, offering a variety of educational sessions, tours, and special events. Open to all interested in old houses and preservation. For more information, visit presnc.org.

J. Michael Welton writes about architecture, art and design for national and international publications, and edits a digital design magazine at www.architectsandartisans.com. He is the author of Drawing from Practice: Architects and the Meaning of Freehand *(Routledge: 2015). He can be reached at mike@architectsandartisans.com.*

Love and Fate

The Port City revealed through the work of artist Nick Mijak

BY JOHN WOLFE



It would be easy to imagine him, easel and palette and brushes and all, at the base of the Sacre-Cœur basilica in Paris, overlooking the wide spread of the city as it unfolds there like a present on Christmas morning. Or perhaps Venice — on a high stone bridge in the setting sunlight, with the gondoliers sculling their vessels on the canals below. He certainly has the craft to capture these exquisite vistas on cold-pressed paper. But instead, Nick Mijak chooses subjects more familiar, but no less complex and varied: the river that pulses through the heart of the town, the battleship monument to those who fell in war, the distinctive silhouette of the Memorial Bridge. The buildings and people, the shadows and light, the rain and sunsets of the Port City.

Love or fate — he's not sure which — brought him here from Nowhere, Northern Michigan ("the land that time forgot," he quips), living a Bohemian dream with a girl who painted with words. When she moved back to Detroit, he remained behind with his dream of painting full-time — a dream he's been living now for the past five years. Growing up, he wanted to be a cartoonist, his heroes Schultz and Breathed, but a Monet exhibit at the Chicago Museum of Art shifted his focus. In his early 20s, he found work as a draftsman, a trade that gave him the discipline and work ethic necessary to paint.

Mijak, who is self-taught, paints *en plein air* — outside in the world, surrounded by "the atmosphere and reality I live in." He works almost exclusively in watercolors, a medium he thinks of as a language he's learning to speak. Out there, his audience can watch him work, or buy a painting from him directly. Children often stop to observe. They're the best, he says. Perhaps, one day, they too will learn to paint. Mijak hopes also to kindle

GUARD
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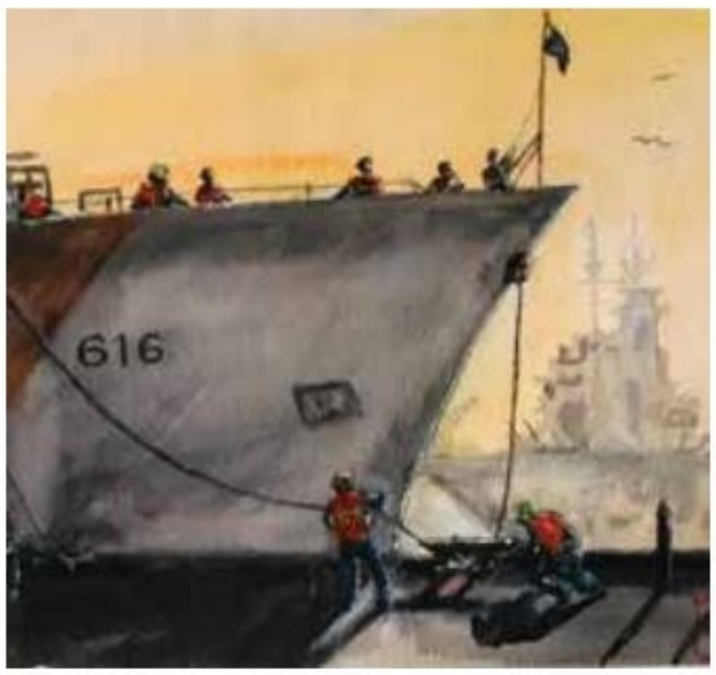
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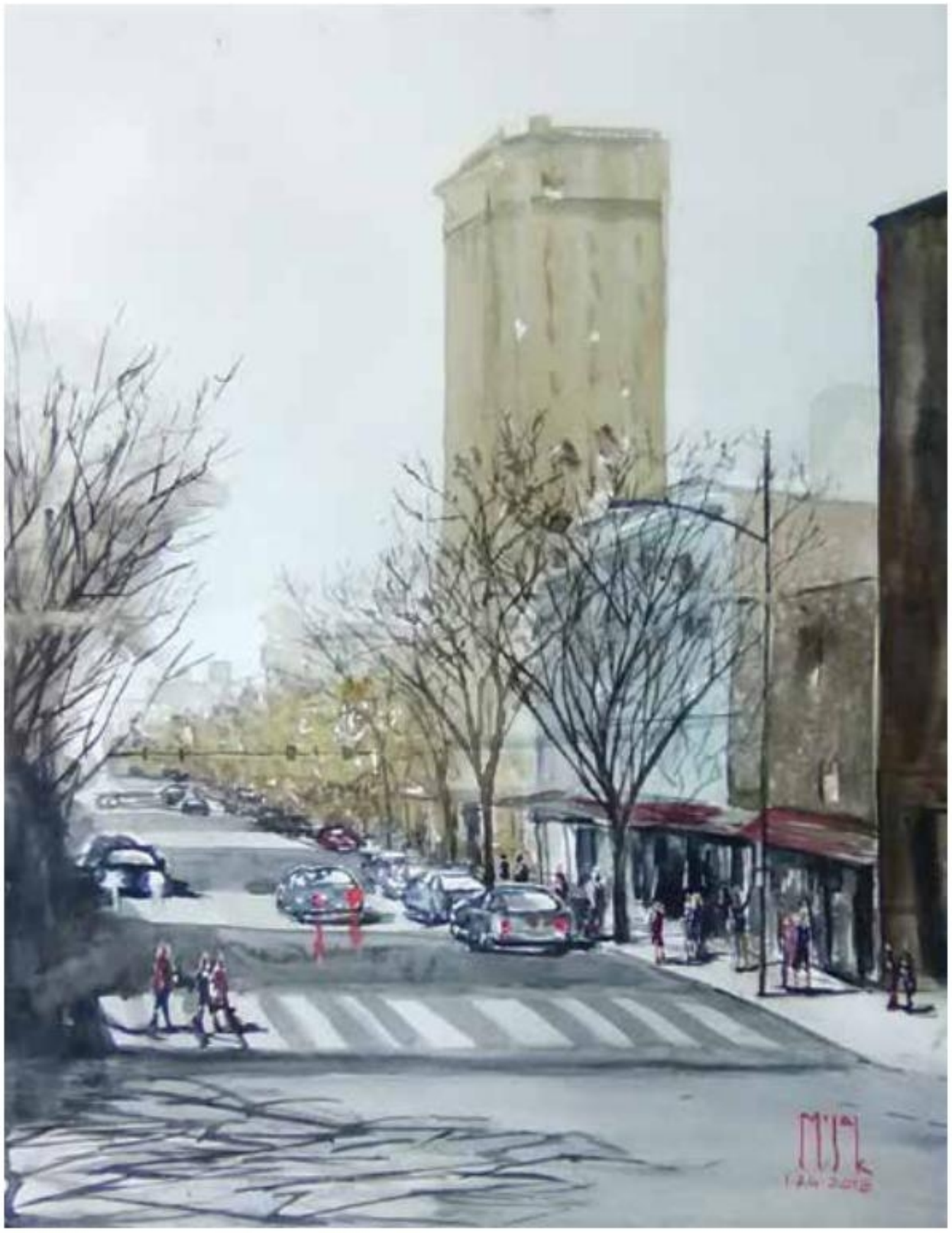
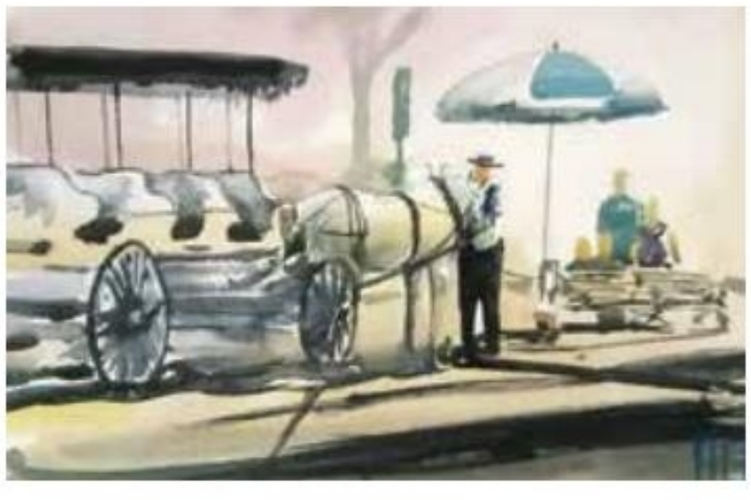
enthusiasm for his craft in those who have never picked up a brush, or who used to but, for life's myriad reasons, haven't painted in years. "I'd like to think I'm inspiring people," he says.

His work is rooted in the Impressionist tradition of painters like Claude Monet, Vincent van Gogh and John Singer Sargent (who mostly painted portraits of high society, but also laid some stunning scenes on canvas). What he is trying to capture is not the objects that he paints themselves, but the atmosphere that surrounds them — the feeling of being in that moment.

"If I'm painting Front Street," he explains, "the buildings don't change. It's always the same scene if you're only looking at the buildings. But if you start to notice the shadows, or the color of the sky, or if there's rain coming in, or it's wet or it's dark or it's morning . . . those elements are always changing. For me, those are the elements that make a painting interesting. That's what gives it a mood, an atmosphere, a feeling. If you look at a painting and feel evening coming, or a storm coming, that's what I try to capture. The atmosphere is the subject matter."

John Wolfe studied creative writing at UNCW. He can be found online at thewriterjohnwolfe.com.





In Search of the Maco Light

Halloween hokum or Joe Baldwin's ghostly light? Our man who has seen the light investigates

By Chris E. Fonvielle Jr.

Photograph by Andrew Sherman

October. The time of year when the oppressive heat and humidity of the long Southern summers finally begins to subside, signaled by verdant vegetation changing colors and golden leaves gliding softly to the ground on cool autumn breezes. The end of the month brings Halloween, when allegedly the space between the living and the dead narrows to a thin veil. Stories of spirits crossing over between the supernatural realm and the natural world are retold again, as they have been for thousands of years. Not many people would admit to believing in ghosts for fear of ridicule, and yet they might concede to being intrigued by the possibility of their existence. Too many reliable people have witnessed strange phenomena that defy rationalization.

If a Ph.D. in American history provides even a modicum of credibility, then count me among those who have witnessed paranormal things I cannot explain. The first time was in 1969, when I was 15 years old, in my hometown of Wilmington, North Carolina. Two friends and I saw what can only be described as a ghost in Thalian Hall, one of the nation's oldest performing arts centers that opened in 1858. I grew up hearing ghost stories from my mother, a TV talk show host and a marvelous actress, and other Wilmingtonians who performed on stage at Thalian Hall or were associated with the theater in some way. Although it was the 1960s, I was not hallucinating when I saw the apparition of a tall, thin man in Edwardian dress, replete with frock coat and knee-high boots, in the main gallery on a late Sunday afternoon in May. My two friends Sam Eckhardt and Tom Saks also witnessed it, describing in detail exactly what my senses encountered.

Mystified by our inexplicable experience at Thalian Hall, we hoped to recapture the nervous excitement we felt by visiting Maco, an unincorporated rural community 14 miles west of Wilmington, and the site of the Lower Cape Fear's most famous ghost story. For more than 100 years people reported seeing an amber-colored light, like a flickering lantern, swaying gently back and forth as it moved slowly up and down the tracks of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad near Hood Creek (also known as Hood's Creek) in Brunswick County. Yet all efforts to discover the source of the Maco Light, as it came to be popularly known, proved futile, and then one day it simply vanished. Before it did, however, I saw it two times.

Before the Civil War, what became Maco was part of Rattlesnake Grade along the Wilmington and Manchester Railroad in Brunswick County. Trains traveling west out of Wilmington ran mostly on flat tracks until they reached Hood Creek, where the ground began rising 22 feet over a 3-mile stretch to Rattlesnake Creek. Railroad men referred to it as Rattlesnake Grade. In 1870 the Wilmington and Manchester Railroad was purchased and reincorporated as the Wilmington, Columbia, and Augusta Railroad. The line eventually merged with the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, later renamed the Seaboard Coast Line. From the early 1870s until Maco was established, locals called the sparsely settled area Farmer's Turnout.

Maco is a derivation of Maraco, one of half a dozen farming communities established in southeastern North Carolina by Hugh MacRae of Wilmington shortly after the turn of the 20th century. MacRae was inspired by an ambitious "Southern Colonization" movement to develop agribusiness districts settled by European immigrants. His Carolina Trucking Development Company established Castle Hayne in New Hanover County for Dutch, Belgians, and Hungarians; St. Helena in Pender County for Italians; New Berlin in Columbus County for Germans, and three other colonies with plans for their migrant residents to grow a wide variety fruits, flowers, and vegetables.

In 1908, MacRae founded his sixth colony, Maraco, on a 10,000-acre tract in west Brunswick County for immigrants from northern Italy. By the following year, Maraco boasted a railroad station on the Atlantic Coast Line, a schoolhouse, and a Catholic church. Yet it apparently failed to attract many Italians or other Europeans, as the sandy soil was not conducive to growing much of anything but scrub oak and pine trees that already dominated the landscape. The Appomattox Box Shook Company built a sawmill mill there, but the community, which locals began calling Maco by 1917, never fulfilled MacRae's vision of a progressive, Italian-based farming district. Instead, Maco became famous for its ghost light.

Legend has it that in 1867 or 1868, a tragic nighttime train accident near the trestle that spanned Hood Creek led to the death by decapitation of a railroad conductor named Joe Baldwin. According to most versions of the story, the caboose in which Baldwin was riding became uncoupled from the locomotive and freight cars, only to be rear-ended by a second train following closely behind. Baldwin tried desperately to prevent the crash by frantically waving a lantern in an effort to warn the engineer of the oncoming train, which speedily approached, of his predicament, but to no avail. The resulting smash-up severely damaged both the second train's locomotive and Baldwin's car. It also wrenched from Baldwin's hand his lantern, which was hurled into swampy ground near Hood Creek. There it continued to burn brightly for a while, and then faded out, as did Joe Baldwin's life. Rescuers rushed to Baldwin's aid, only to find his broken body among the twisted wreckage. His head, severed in the collision, allegedly was never found.

Shortly after the disastrous mishap, residents of Rattlesnake Grade reported seeing an inexplicable light that emanated near Hood Creek, and then moved up and down the railroad tracks. It appeared spontaneously during the night, sometimes soon after the onset of darkness and sometimes in the predawn hours. The light did not come out every night, and more often than not it did not show at all. When

it did appear, the light seemed to hover about five feet above the ground, swaying gently from side to side as it slowly or quickly advanced, and then retreated along the tracks before disappearing near the trestle. The most plausible explanation for the mysterious glow, locals came to believe, was that Joe Baldwin had returned from the dead to search for his missing head, without which he could never truly be at rest.

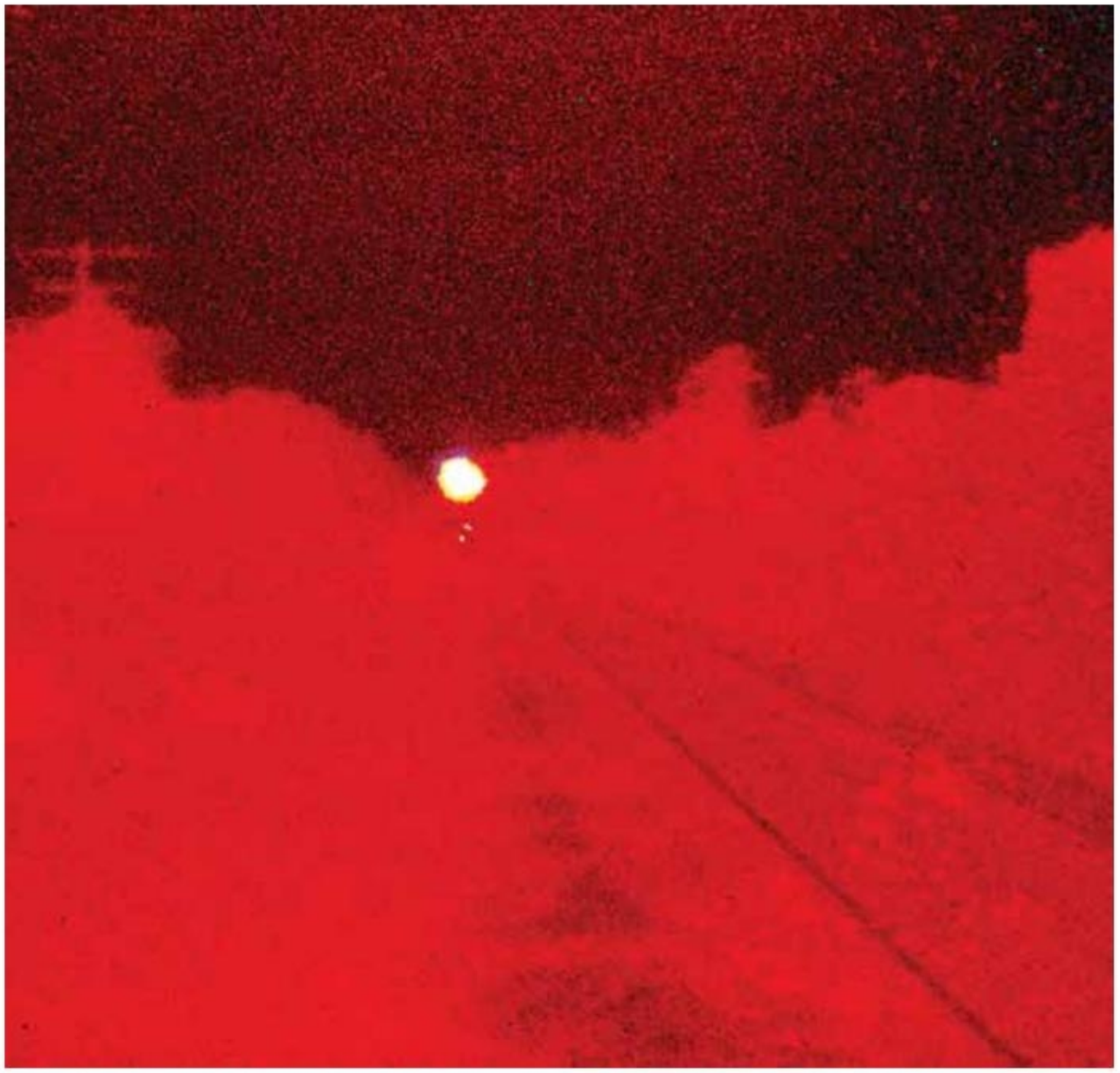
The earliest known and most graphic published account of the Maco Light appeared in *The State* magazine in 1934. In "And the Light Goes On," Charles N. Allen wrote that the strange story prompted him to investigate it more fully. In the end he offered the most vivid account of the phenomenon. "A mile or more down the right-of-way there is a flicker over the left rail, as if someone had struck a match," Allen wrote of his personal encounter:

> "The eerie-looking thing sways a little and begins creeping up the tracks. Your eyes are magically glued to its movements. The thing comes on. It becomes brighter as its momentum increases. Then it begins dashing toward you with incredible velocity. Paralyzed, you just stand there waiting for the thing to rend you to pieces, but it never reaches you. It comes to a sudden halt fifty or seventy-five yards from where you are standing. It glares at you for a moment like a fiery eye, then it speeds rapidly back down the tracks. It stops now where it first made its appearance and glows ominously there like a red moon in miniature. Then it vanishes into nothingness."

The publisher of *The State* admitted being incredulous at first of Allen's far-fetched story upon its submission for publication. He checked it out thoroughly, only to be told by several Wilmingtonians that they had seen the Maco Light "a number of times."

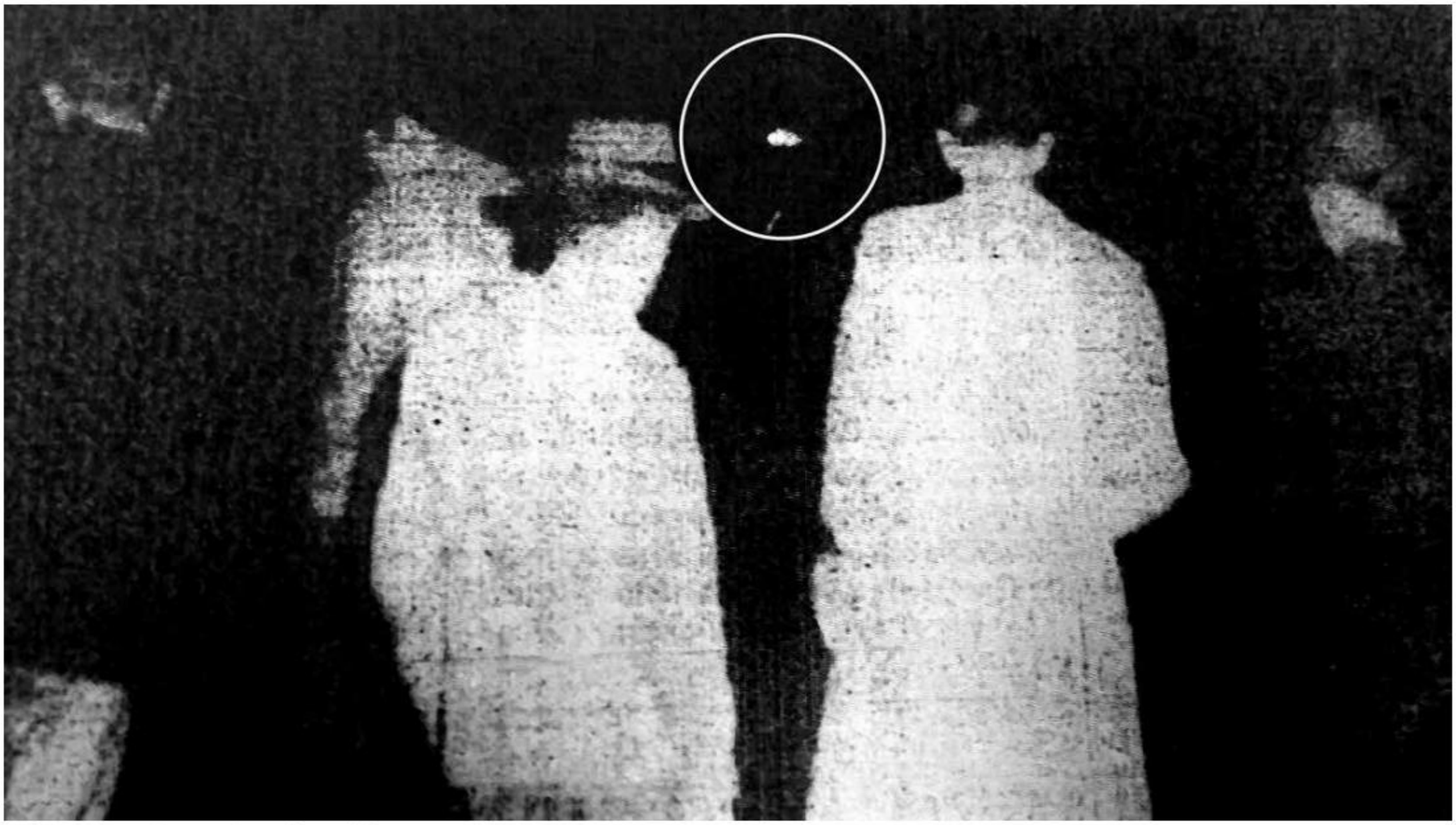
News of the Maco Light spread quickly across North Carolina. The *Robesonian* published an account of five men from Lumberton who visited Maco on the night of July 29, 1940, to try and uncover the "mystery of [the] moving light seen from Seaboard railway tracks." In August 1941, the editor of the *Statesville Record and Landmark* wrote that, "according to tradition this light, famously known in that vicinity as 'Uncle Joe's lantern,' has attracted excursionists to the scene for half a century, maybe longer." Indeed, Mrs. Lee Skipper Mintz, who had lived at Maco for 65 of her 83 years in 1964, claimed to have seen the light on a number of occasions, the first time when she was only 5 or 6 years old.

Louis T. Moore, secretary of the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce and a collector of Cape Fear stories dating back to colonial times, helped popularize, if not create, the story of Joe Baldwin in a 1948 *Wilmington Morning Star* article, "A.C.L. Favorite 'Ghost' Story." Recognizing that nothing attracts interest (or tourists) more than a tale from the supernatural, Moore wrote that the Atlantic Coast Line, like other rail lines, "has its favorite ghost or ghost story," but in the case of the Maco Light, the "ghost exists," he declared.



1958 infrared photograph of the Maco Light

According to Moore, former President Grover Cleveland learned of "Joe Baldwin's Ghostly Light" while traveling up the Wilmington, Columbia, and Augusta Railroad from Florida to Washington, D.C. while on a Southern tour shortly after he left office in 1889. As the train approached Wilmington, it made a brief stopover at Farmer's Turnout to take on fuel and water. The day was balmy, encouraging Cleveland to disembark his car to get a breath of fresh air. While strolling along the tracks, he noticed a brakeman carrying two different color signal lanterns, one green and one white, and asked about them. He was told that they prevented railroad engineers from being deceived by the "ghostly weaving of the Joe Baldwin light." Subsequent accounts said that President Cleveland actually saw the light, but that was not possible as his train passed through Farmer's Turnout



Wilmington Morning Star *photo of the Maco Light*

about eight o'clock in the morning on April 5, 1889.

Moore also assert that, back in 1873, a second light materialized "shining with the brightness of a 25-watt electric light bulb," and that the two lights would pass each other going in opposite directions along the railroad tracks. An earthquake that shook the east coast in 1886 temporarily halted Joe's jaunts, but his light soon reappeared. "Folks knew then that Joe was again in search of his head," Moore maintained. He also wrote that a U.S. Army machine gun detachment from Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, encamped at Maco "to try and solve the mystery, or at least perforate it," but there is no evidence to support the claim." There is no evidence to support it. Moore rewrote his newspaper story as "Joe Baldwin's Ghostly Light at Maco" for his popular book, *Stories Old and New of the Cape Fear Region*, first published in 1956.

The Maco Light received noteworthy national coverage when *Life* magazine published the "true ghost story," including a photo illustration of the light, in October 1957. The following month, a group of reporters from the *Wilmington News* took a grainy black and white photograph of a distant glowing object along the darkened railroad tracks at Maco, one of only a few extant images of the phenomenon. Many eyewitnesses — regular folks, geologists, electronic engineers, paranormal explorers, and others — posited theories as to the origin of light that ran the gamut from the reflection of car headlights to swamp gas, phosphate fumes, and a real ghost. People had seen the Maco Light since at least the mid-1880s, years before the advent of the automobile, and a drivable road from Wilmington to rural communities in west Brunswick County, including Maco, was not even constructed until 1918. Moreover, no scientist could explain the relative containment of the glowing orb or its regular movements only along the railroad tracks.

In 1964 the Southeastern North Carolina Beach Association invited Hans Holzer, proclaimed as "one of the world's most distinguished authorities on 'ghostism,'" to visit the area in an attempt to solve the Maco mystery. The group's executive director characterized Joe Baldwin as "the most popular ghost in America today." Holzer's acceptance and resulting publicity attracted many hundreds of people to the light site in the days leading up to his arrival and during his treks to Maco in early May. When the light failed to make its appearance, Holzer blamed the large crowds for keeping it away. Nevertheless, he declared the "physic phenomenon" the spirit of Joe Baldwin. "There is no other explanation," he stated to enthusiasts at a public address in Wilmington, during which he sold many copies of his first book, *Ghost Hunter.*

Perhaps it was Hans Holzer's declaration that inspired Tex Lancaster, a country music guitarist who had played on Wilmington's first TV station WFD back in 1954, to write and record "The Legend of Old Joe Baldwin" ten years later. In 1965 Grant Turner, a member of the Country Music

Hall of Fame, released "Maco Light" on Chart Records out of Nashville, but it failed to chart as a hit. Thirty years later, Wilmington musicians Rob Nathanson and John Golden co-wrote and recorded "The Light at Maco Station," a combination train song and ghost story, for their album *Cape Fear Songs*. Real or not, Joe Baldwin made an impact on American pop culture.

In every myth and legend there is an element of truth, and such is the case with the Maco Light. While researching antebellum North Carolina railroads for his Ph.D. dissertation at UNC Greensboro in 2004, James Burke discovered an account of the accidental death of Charles Baldwin, on the Wilmington and Manchester Railroad, at Rattlesnake Grade near Hood Creek on the night of January 4, 1856. According to a report in the *Wilmington Daily Journal* the following day:

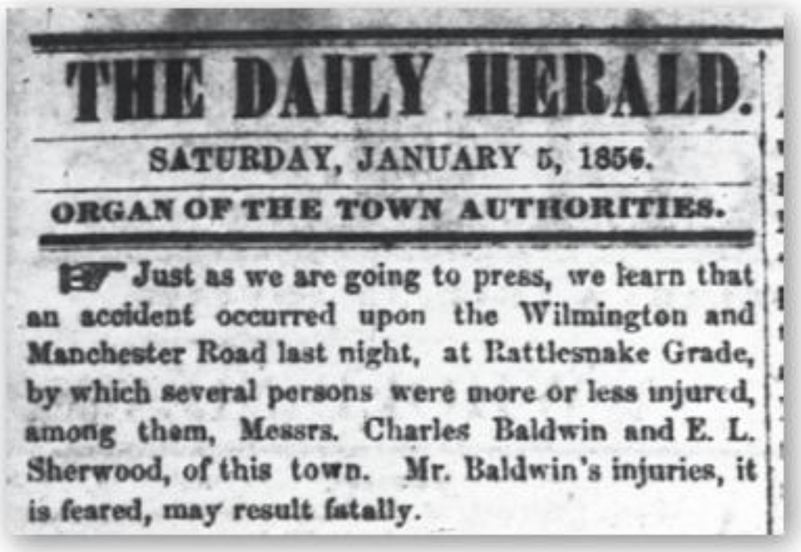
> "Some defect in the working of the pumps of the Locomotive engaged in carrying up the night train going west from this place, the Engineer detached the train and ran on ahead some distance, and in returning back to take up the [mail] train again, came back at so high a rate of speed as to cause a serious collision, resulting in some damage to the train. The most painful circumstance connected with the affair is that Mr. Charles Baldwin, the conductor, got seriously, and it is feared, mortally injured, by being thrown from the train with so much force as to cause concussion of the brain."

Charles Baldwin, a 38-year-old New Yorker who had moved to Wilmington several years earlier, died on January 7, 1856, as a result of his injuries sustained in the crash. He was buried in Oakdale Cemetery in Wilmington the following day. Sadly, the location of his grave has been lost. Despite his best efforts, Burke found no record of a Joe Baldwin linked to Wilmington or the Lower Cape Fear.

Somehow, some way, the distant public memory of Charles Baldwin's death in the unfortunate train accident at Rattlesnake Grade in 1856 became discombobulated with "Uncle Joe's lantern" and the headless ghost with Louis T. Moore's telling of the story first published in the *Wilmington Morning Star* 92 years later. Joe Baldwin or no Joe Baldwin, the Maco Light was seen by thousands of people until the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad pulled up the tracks in 1977, after which time it vanished.

Along with a small group of friends, I saw the Maco Light twice in the summer of 1969. The first time it appeared as a small glowing orb that seemed to sway from side to side along the rail line near Hood Creek, several hundred yards from our position to the west. The second time we visited the site the light moved upon us so quickly, and radiated such a powerful illumination, that we could see its reflection on the hood of our car. It soon moved back down the tracks, as we stood watching in exhilarated disbelief.

Jim Jochum captured the most compelling evidence of

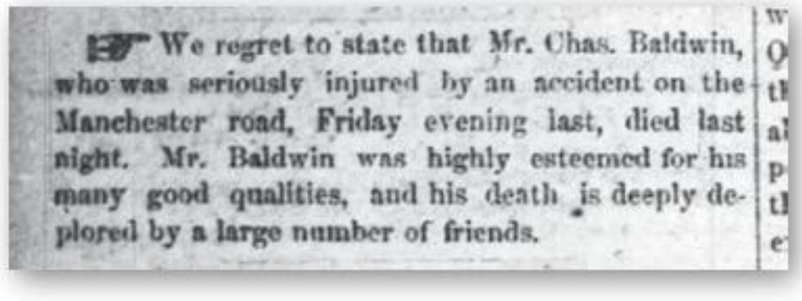


THE DAILY HERALD.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 5, 1856.

ORGAN OF THE TOWN AUTHORITIES.

☞ Just as we are going to press, we learn that an accident occurred upon the Wilmington and Manchester Road last night, at Rattlesnake Grade, by which several persons were more or less injured, among them, Messrs. Charles Baldwin and E. L. Sherwood, of this town. Mr. Baldwin's injuries, it is feared, may result fatally.



☞ We regret to state that Mr. Chas. Baldwin, who was seriously injured by an accident on the Manchester road, Friday evening last, died last night. Mr. Baldwin was highly esteemed for his many good qualities, and his death is deeply deplored by a large number of friends.

the Maco Light's existence. He visited the site frequently with his family when they traveled from their home in Winston Salem to Bolivia near Maco, where his first wife's parents lived. Jochum first saw the light in 1953. Five years and many viewings later, he took three spectacular photographs of the light using an infrared camera on a tripod loaned to him by scientist friends who worked at Bell Laboratories in Winston Salem. The most intriguing image clearly shows the light and its reflection on the railroad tracks, with the tree line and a telephone pole also visible. "The Maco Light was real," says Jochum, now a spry 86-year-old resident of Greensboro. "I know because I saw it at least 15 times and photographed it."

Maco never was much of a town, even less so after the North Carolina Department of Transportation rerouted and widened Highway 74/76 to four lanes in the late 20th century. Life largely passes by Maco now. Yet for decades it was the ghost capital of the Tar Heel State and the site of the Lower Cape Fear's most famous ghost story. And if the Maco Light was not a specter, wrote noted journalist Ben Steelman of the *Wilmington Star News* in 2004, "why does it no longer shine?"

Chris E. Fonvielle Jr. is professor emeritus in the Department of History at UNC Wilmington. A Civil War and Cape Fear historian and author, he received the Order of the Long Leaf Pine for distinguished service to the State of North Carolina upon his retirement in 2018. *He would like to thank Jane and Doug Anderson of Port City Paranormal; Nancy Fonvielle; Jim Jochum; Rob Nathanson; Daniel Norris of SlapDash Publishing; and Joe Sheppard of the New Hanover County Public Library for their assistance with this article.*

Arts in Bloom

The expansion of Brunswick Community College's innovative Southport Center cements the area's future as a regional arts hub

Story and Photography by Virginia Holman

There's always been something special about Southport, North Carolina. This inviting waterfront town, positioned a few miles north of the confluence of Cape Fear River and the Atlantic Ocean, has a breezy coastal vibe, and a charming downtown and harbor front. A quick drive around the town is a revelation in how coastal communities can promote balanced development. Unlike Wilmington, Pleasure Island or Wrightsville Beach, the town of Southport has preserved a good bit of its green space and clearly cherishes its many sprawling, ancient live oaks. Its streets are filled with well-maintained historic houses, old churches, quaint bed-and-breakfasts, upscale clothing boutiques, art galleries, antiques shops and specialty stores that cater to everyone from bird enthusiasts to wine connoisseurs. In the last decade, this small town has become a popular place for families and retirees to live, either year-round or as "snowbirds."

For many years, Southport's residents found that in order to fully participate in the Cape Fear region's lively arts and crafts scene, they had to drive up to 45 minutes to Wilmington. Although there were painting classes and opportunities for artists to sell their wares at Southport's pre-eminent Franklin Square Gallery and elsewhere, nearby options were few for people interested in pottery making, silversmithing, woodturning, stained glass and warm glass — disciplines that require specialized equipment, good ventilation and substantial space. Brunswick Community College recognized that Southport's population wanted a more robust arts community, and in a canny move three years ago, they envisioned transforming their small campus in Southport into a vibrant community arts center.

The campus, currently in the last phase of a major renovation and expansion, is located on South Lord Street, just a block back from bustling North Howe Street. This spot also happens to be the site of another revered educational institution, Brunswick County Training School Number 1. This historic school was part of the Rosenwald Program, a progressive partnership between Jewish businessman Julius Rosenwald (a co-owner of Sears Roebuck) and esteemed African-American author, educator and philanthropist Booker T. Washington, which helped fund more than 5,000 accredited schools for African-American students throughout the South. Slated to open in 1921, fire destroyed the building before classes could begin. Undeterred by this setback, the African-American community raised funds and County Training School Number 2 was built. It remained the sole accredited school for blacks in Brunswick County until 1951. Later, the building served as Southport Middle School. A 20-foot-long historic panel in the main hallway of the newly renovated Southport Center commemorates the tremendous importance of this site and its educational history.

The site's latest educational iteration as BCC's Southport Center doesn't fully capture the scope of the classes that are offered. Under the keen leadership of director Dr. Barbara McFall, a career arts administrator from West Virginia University, the Southport Center is completing an expansion that seems certain to cement the area's future as an arts hub set to rival those found in the mountain com-

munities that surround Asheville, North Carolina.

McFall says that the mission and vision of the center is to "offer classes in arts, crafts and cultural heritage." There are plans to expand offerings to a wide array of classes—everything from painting, pottery, stained glass, warm glass, silversmithing, woodturning, tiny house building, quilting, weaving, metal sculpture and mystery writing, as well as classes on Cape Fear historic sites and architecture, French and Latin — at rates that are affordable for retirees on a fixed income and those workers who may be looking for their second act in the arts.

One pleasant surprise: The center has had to do very little in the way of marketing, as locals have flocked there — it has quickly established itself as one of the pillars of Southport's growing and vibrant arts scene.

McFall notes that the center also appeals to people who are exploring a new career in the arts. That's one of the big goals of the center, to serve as a mechanism to "feed Southport's arts scene and allow people to explore the arts as a second career." She points out that the purpose of the center is "to help undergird the arts community in Southport. We have no desire or plans to compete with arts businesses and galleries in Southport. That's not our mission." In fact, many of the students who attend sell their wares in Southport and beyond.

"A good number of our students sell their art in area galleries, farmers markets, on sites like Etsy, and at tent sales," says McFall. Even during the winter months, when the north wind blows and the coast can seem a bit bleak, the Southport Center stays busy. "We have snowbirds who come down here in the winter and make, make, make, and then head back north in the summer and sell, sell, sell!"

Most of all, the Southport Center has become an accessible community fixture. Stained-glass student and retired Indiana guidance counselor Molly Thompson moved to Southport three years ago. She says she was out riding her bike one day when "I discovered there was a college in town. I signed up for stained glass that very day. I've made lifelong friends, and I finally feel like I belong." She says that stepping out of her comfort zone and discovering a new part of herself has been a revelation. Her son was impressed when he saw the things she's made. "He said he didn't realize I could do something creative like that. I told him I didn't realize it either."

Another student, Nancy Styles, says she looks forward to class each week and describes how her classmates have become "wonderful friends." She says that she always learns something new from her teacher, Jenny Bellini. "I love my classes and my new friends."

Want to learn more about classes at the Southport Center? http://www.brunswickcc.edu/southport-center/

Virginia Holman lives and writes in Carolina Beach.

STORY OF A HOUSE

Twice a Charm

How the historic Runge-Fales House and warmth of neighbors sealed the deal for a pair of New Jersey empty-nesters

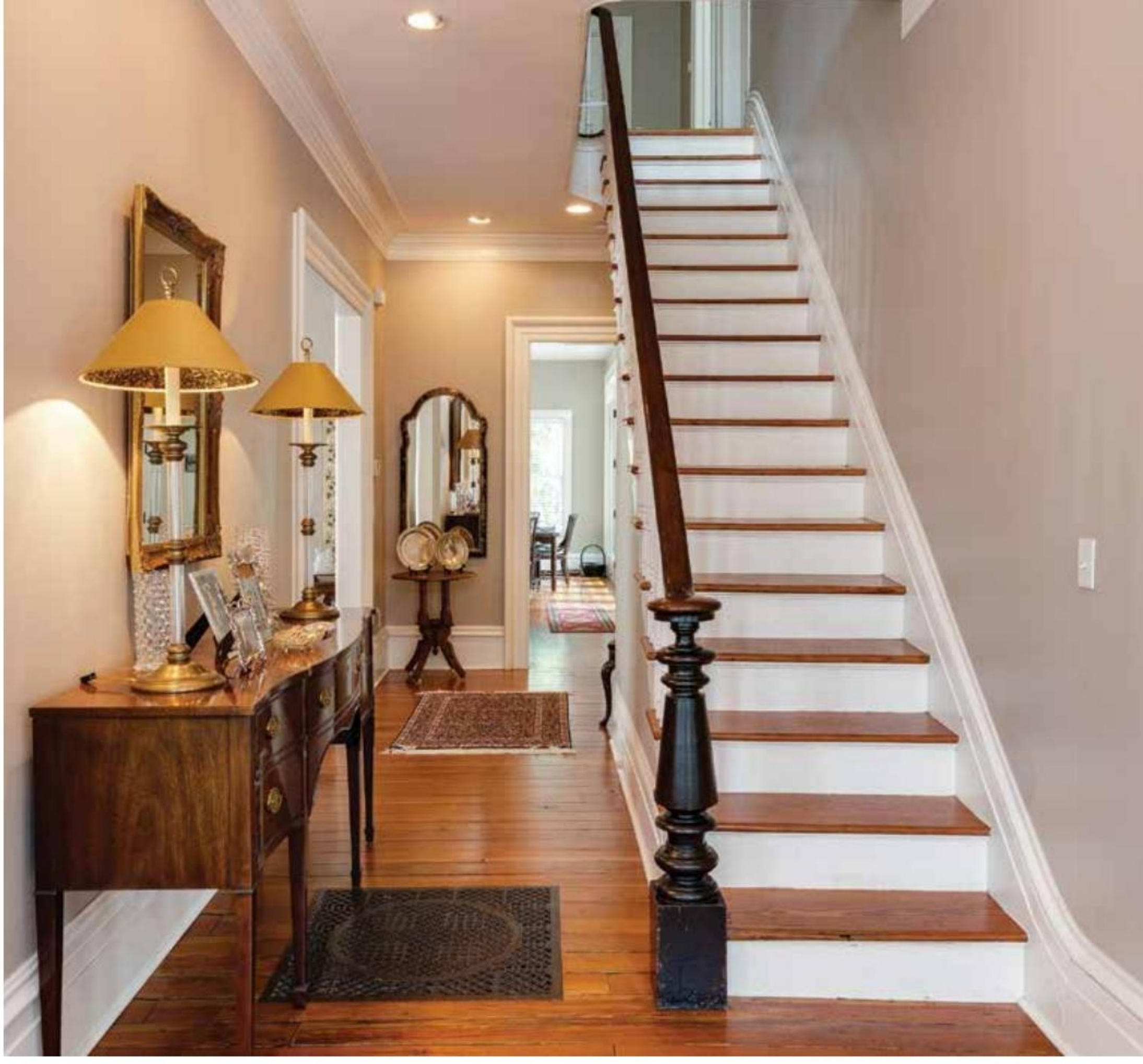
By William Irvine · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

For Mary Grace Denton and Peter Maloff, it was time for a new chapter. The couple had successful careers and had been long settled in Basking Ridge, New Jersey, when the siren song of a Southern retirement beckoned. "Actually, Wilmington was not our first choice," says Peter. "We actually looked at about 10 places first, among them Savannah, Charleston, Nashville, Athens, Georgia and Chapel Hill." Their requirements were not too rigorous: They wanted to live in a place near a lively downtown that also had a yard. Peter's son was living in Charlotte at the time, and New Jersey friends suggested that they look on the coast. "And we fell in love with Wilmington," says Mary Grace with a smile. "The historic district sealed the deal for us," adds Peter. "Just the idea that there were all these historic houses right downtown. We were sold."

Soon they were shown (and swiftly purchased) the elegant Runge-Fales House on Fifth Avenue, one of the highlights of this year's Back Door Kitchen Tour, which will be hosted by the Residents of Old Wilmington (ROW) on October 20.

The Greek Revival-style house was built around 1870 for Gerhard Henry William Runge (1828-1876), a grocer and saloon keeper, and his wife, Johanna Eckel (1936-1920), natives of Hanover, Germany. A foresighted businessman, Runge built two houses — his own large residence and a smaller house next door, so his wife would be able to rent the property after he died and produce some income.

Soon after Johanna's death, the house was purchased by the Fales family. James Benjamin Franklin Fales (1859-1925) was the proprietor and owner of J.B. Fales and Sons Wholesale Fish House. The Faleses were quite prolific, and the house stayed in the family until 2016. When James and his wife, Maggie Hewlett, lived in the house, the entire family would gather there. "The last owner told us



that he used to love to come here for the family visits to his grandparents," says Peter. "He and his cousins would fight about who got to retrieve the eggs from the chicken coop in the backyard." The Faleses added the dramatic portico in the front of the house and the commodious wrap-around porch, where Peter now likes to read the morning papers.

At one time there were Fales children in two houses across the street and another near Wrightsville Beach. One of the children was Dr. Robert Martin Fales (1907-1995), a physician and local historian, who begin his early practice in their house. "You can see that there is an extra door off the living room — that was formerly the waiting room for patients," says Peter. The examination room was in the back south-facing parlor behind.

After World War II, the house was divided into four apartments. "At one time it was known at the Star-News house, because it was occupied by four reporters from the newspaper," says Mary Grace.

Fast-forward to the early 2000s, when Jack McFale of California purchased the house from his Fales aunt. It was he who converted the house back into a single-family residence in 2007. After renting it for several years, he put it back on the market in 2016, when it attracted the attention of Denton and Maloff.

Wasn't it daunting for two empty-nesters (and their standard poodle, Henry) to find enough furniture to fill the large house? "Furnishing the house was no challenge," says Peter. "We got married in 2010 and combined two homes into one. Not long after, we retrieved some fine pieces from Mary Grace's mom. And when we arrived in Wilmington, we were introduced to the pleasures and treasures of Southern Home and the Ivy Cottage, where we made some strategic additions."

The first floor has a layout that is typical of the period: two pairs of formal parlors flanking the hallway and a kitchen in the back. The front hall has the original highly burnished 150-year-old heart-

pine floors, in beautiful condition. Peter's collection of American pottery is in a display case, mostly mid-Atlantic pieces supplemented with works from Chatauqua in upstate New York.

The parlor rooms are now furnished with a pleasing selection of modern upholstered pieces in earth tones, mixed with family heirlooms, including a handsome 19th century drop-leaf table and a group of four large watercolor landscapes that came with them from New Jersey.

The kitchen, in the back of the house, was designed with a serious cook in mind. There is a large kitchen island with a huge slab of green marble (all one piece). Cabinets are simple white, with iron drawer pulls that are faintly Colonial Revival in style. There is a Wolf range with a built-in grill and a side-by-side Sub-Zero refrigerator. All restoration work is by Tommy Rogers. Off the kitchen is a sunroom with a view to the backyard, which also features a brick terrace for afternoon cocktails.

They have made this glorious house a home. And it turns out that Wilmington has been a great choice, after all. Says Peter: "We were startled — twice — by the reception we received when we arrived in Wilmington: first, in the very beginning when we were warmly welcomed in our neighborhood; and second, when we realized that the kind expressions of welcome made to us were as sincere as they sounded." Words to make a native smile.

Residents of Old Wilmington's 13th annual Back Door Kitchen Tour will take place on October 20 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. In addition to the Runge-Fales House, there will be eight other downtown properties open for tours. Tickets are $25 in advance; $30 the day of the event. Tickets are available at Ivy Cottage, Cape Fear Spice Merchants, and various Harris Teeter stores or online at rowilmington.org. Since its founding in 1973, Residents of Old Wilmington (ROW) promotes preservation and beautification of the downtown historic districts through advocacy, volunteer projects, and monetary grants.

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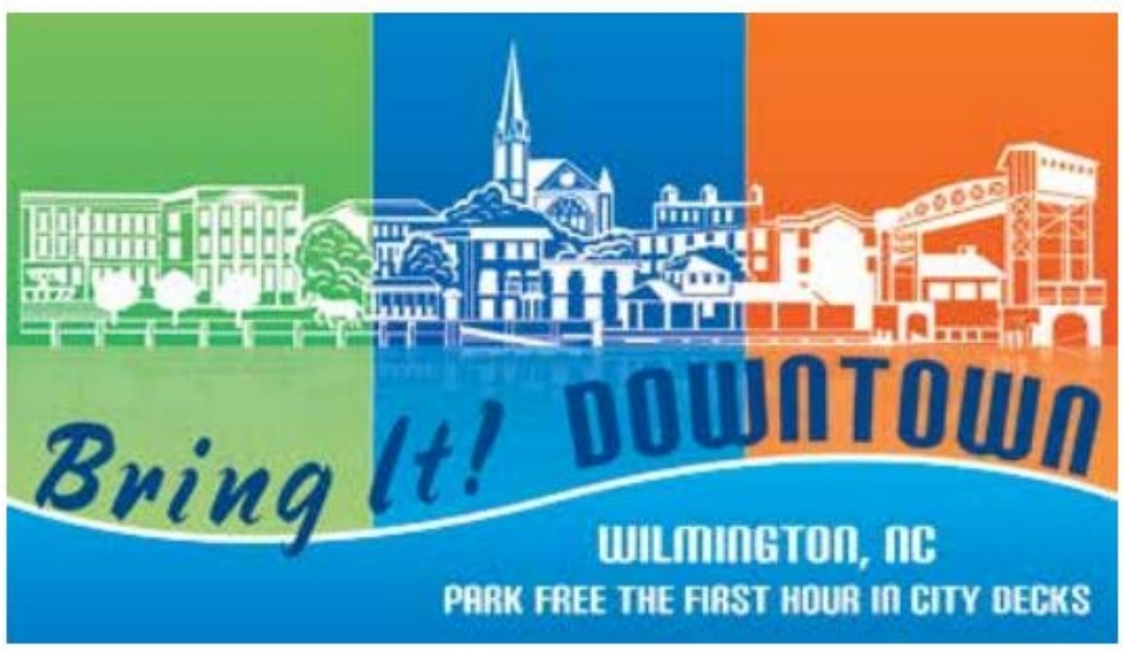

ALMANAC

October

By Ash Alder

October is a window to a sacred temple.

Inside, the poplar undresses. She does not toil for attention, nor does she shrink from it. She simply allows her beauty in its many forms, moved by an ever-changing rhythm, the blessed pulse of all creation.

This is what Ralph Waldo Emerson meant when he declared every natural action graceful.

As poplar spills her golden leaves across the lawn, the patio, the sidewalk, we gasp at the totality of her surrender, the magnitude of her offering, the dazzling purity of her perfect faith.

Poplar is a living prayer.

As we rake her fallen leaves, tidy piles awaiting compost, a lusty wind scatters our efforts. *Let go*, poplar whispers. We too must learn the dance of sweet surrender.

In the garden, we dig up summer bulbs and sweet potatoes, plant fennel, dill and sage, and when a holy swirl of swallows flashes across the pale horizon, again we gasp.

Swallows light on poplar's branches, and as children drum on swollen pumpkins in the patch, the hymn of autumn rises.

Glory be this hallowed month. Glory be October.

Nature's Candy

Songbirds arrive and depart, dark-eyed juncos (snowbirds) replacing our yellow-rumped warblers, indigo buntings, northern flickers. Flashes of color dazzle the periphery, and in the garden, where feeders sway between visitors and the last tomato has been plucked, pansies paint the landscape magnificent.

Named from the French word *pensée,* which means "thought" or "remembrance," pansies are early bloomers adored for their bright petals and cheerful "faces." Like violets, known for their intoxicating perfume, pansies are members of the genus *Viola* and can bloom all through winter.

They're edible too.

Add them to purple kale salads or creamy carrot soups, and in the spirit of Halloween, candy them.

Pansies, pansies everywhere, and now's the time to plant them.

Plant in full to partial sun, six or more inches apart. Water once or twice a week, remove dead blooms to encourage new growth, and as they bloom yellow, scarlet, purple, orange, consider the warmth these cold-hardy darlings will bring to you and all who see them.

DIY Love Potion

In the 19th century, wild pansies were often used in love potions. Also called Johnny Jump Up, tickle-me-fancy, heartsease, and love-in-idleness, a creeping viola by any other name would smell as rousingly sweet.

Want to try making your own?

Pour boiling water over two cups of fresh-picked violets, cover, then allow the flowers to steep for 24 hours. Next, move them to the refrigerator, where they can continue steeping. Wait two more days, strain the infusion, then add two tablespoons of brandy or gin. Bottle, keep refrigerated, and when inspired, use as perfume or a fragrant mist for rooms and linens.

You'll love it.

Pumpkin Eater

They're everywhere. Big ones and small ones. Prizewinners and miniatures. The heirlooms are darling, but the perfect orange ones call for carving.

National Pumpkin day is celebrated on October 26, two days past the full Hunters Moon.

Have your latte, if you'd like. I'll take mine in a pie. Brown sugar, homemade crust. Thin slices, so seconds are a must.

For the Birds

This month, we've got peanuts and pumpkin seeds for munchies. And as we snack from the back porch, backyard birds preparing for migration need fuel too.

Fill the feeders (black oil sunflower seeds are best).

Water the birdbaths.

Plant chokeberry.

And if you really want to delight weary foragers, offer fruit.

Blueberries, blackberries, elderberries, raspberries, peaches, and purple grapes. Arrange them on a wide platform feeder, sit back, and enjoy autumn's brilliant color show.

Arts Calendar

6th Annual WBLA Longboard Pro-Am

10/6

The O'Jays in Concert

10/10

Monster Movie Madness at the Mansion

10/26

10/1 Brunswick County Golf Tournament

11 a.m.-6:30 p.m. The Magnolia Greens Golf Course in Leland is the setting for the 7th annual Brunswick County Golf Tournament, to benefit the Good Shepherd Center. This is a four-person scramble format; entry includes 18 holes of golf with carts and a dinner following the tournament. There will be a silent auction including golf and outings and other travel, plus items from boutiques and businesses. A Games Day includes bridge, mahjong, canasta and other fun. Tickets: $100 per golf player. Magnolia Greens Golf Course, 1800 Linkwood Circle, Leland. Info: (910) 763-4424 or goodshepherdwilmington.org.

10/1 Cameron Art Museum

10 a.m.-5 p.m. The Cameron Art Museum presents three new exhibitions opening this month. "Feather by Feather: The Sculptures of Grainger McKoy" looks at the artist's elaborately carved bird sculptures. "Along the Eastern Sea Road: Hiroshige's 53 Stations of the Tokaido" is a selection of the celebrated Japanese printmaker's landscapes. "Nearer to Nature" features works from the permanent collection. Admission: $8-$10. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or cameronartmuseum.org.

10/4 Fall Migratory Bird ID Workshop

9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Becky Skiba of the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission and Andy Fairbanks of Halyburton Park conduct a workshop to explore the warblers, raptors, and shorebirds of the Cape Fear region. Pre-registration required. Admission: $10. Halyburton Park, 4099 South 17th Street, Wilmington. For info: (910) 341-0075 or wilmingtonrecreation.com.

10/4-7 Cannibal! The Musical

8 p.m. - 10:30 p.m. Pineapple-Shaped Lamps presents Cannibal! The Musical by Trey Parker, the co-creator of South Park and the TonyAward-winning Book of Mormon. A gory and satirical adventure of gold miners in the Rocky Mountains. Tickets: $22 - $25. Hannah Block Community Arts Center, 120 South 2nd St., Wilmington. For info and tickets: pslcomedy.com.

10/4-6 U.S. Open King Mackerel Tournament

There is great fall fishing in Southport, and the U.S. Open King Mackerel Tournament, founded more than 35 years ago, attracts more than 500 boats annually and is now one of the largest kingfish tournaments on the East Coast. Cash prizes are awarded. Admission: Free for spectators. Boat entry fee. Southport Marina, 606 West Street, Southport. For info: (910) 457-5787 or usopenkmt.com.

10/5-7 Roast and Toast on the Coast — Bald Head Island

The fourth annual Roast and Toast on the Coast kicks off on Friday night with an oyster roast at the Bald Head Island Club, followed on Saturday by an afternoon barbecue party and a dinner and silent auction to benefit the Old Baldy Foundation. Bluegrass band Massive Grass will perform. Bald Head Island, NC. For tickets and information: roasttoastcoast.com.

10/5-7 Art in the Arboretum

The Friends of the New Hanover County Arboretum and the Wilmington Art Association present Art in the Arboretum, the largest coastal outdoor art show in North Carolina. Local artists will display paintings, pottery, prints and sculpture. Prizes will be awarded. Other highlights include a raffle. silent auction, and performances by local musicians. Admission: $5. New Hanover County Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. For info: (910) 798-7660 or nhcarboretum.org.

10/6 16th Annual WBLA Longboard Pro-Am

8 a.m. - 5 p.m. The Wrightsville Beach Longboard Association (WBLA) will host the 16th annual WBLA Longboard Pro Am this year. Competitions include longboard classic pro-am heats, semifinals, and finals. Admission: Free for spectators. Wrightsville Beach Access #4, 2398

Lumina Avenue, Wrightsville Beach. To register and for more info: wblasurf.org.

10/6 Taste of Wrightsville Beach

5 p.m. - 8 p.m. The Wrightsville Beach Foundation presents the 6th annual Taste of Wrightsville Beach takes place on the waterfront this evening at MarineMax, celebrating local cuisine and breweries. Prizes will be awarded by celebrity judges. Proceeds will be divided among local charities, including Meals on Wheels, the Wrightsville Beach Sea Turtle Project, and the Harbor Way Garden, among others. Tickets: $25-$75. MarineMax, 275 Waynick Blvd., 130 Short Street, Wrightsville Beach. For info: wrightsvillebeachfoundation.org.

10/5-7 Riverfest

Wilmington's annual street fair takes place downtown with special exhibits, vendors selling homemade crafts, food vendors and trucks and a classic car show. Saturday night fireworks display. Admission: Free. Market and Water Streets, Wilmington. For info: wilmingtonriverfest.com.

10/9 George Thorogood and Destroyers

7:30 p.m. Cape Fear Stage presents George Thorogood and the Destroyers Rock Party Tour 2018. Tickets: $35-$88. Wilson Center, 703 N. 3rd St., Wilmington. For more info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu/capefearstage.

10/10 The O'Jays in Concert

7:30 p.m. Cape Fear Stage presents pop and R&B sensations The O'Jays. Tickets: $49-$105. Wilson Center, 703 N. 3rd St., Wilmington. For more info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu/capefearstage.

10/11- 13 Preservation Weekend

Historic Wilmington Foundation offers a variety of history-inspired information and fun this weekend, with events including a high-school speech contest, a class on how to research your old house and apply for a historic plaque, and a workshop on the repair of old-pane glass. Admission: Free. For info: (910) 762-2511 or historicwilmington.org.

10/10-11 An Evening With the Capitol Steps — Thalian Hall

7:30 p.m. The American political satire group the Capitol Steps has been a cultural institution since 1981. Come see an evening of sketches and parodies with bipartisan skewering. Political content updated daily! Tickets: $15-$46. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. For more info and tickets: thalianhall.org.

10/11 -28 Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery

8 p.m.; Sunday matinees 3 p.m. Big Dawg Productions presents Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery, Ken Ludwig's madcap adaptation of Arthur Conan Doyle's classic, The Hound of the Baskervilles. Tickets: $25. Cape Fear Playhouse, 613 Castle Street, Wilmington. For more info and tickets: bigdawgproductions.org.

10/13 Fire in the Pines Festival — Halyburton Park

10 a.m - 3 p.m. This family-friendly annual event, sponsored by the Nature Conservancy, the City of Wilmington, and the North Carolina Forest Service, is a day of outdoor education, with more than 40 youth and environmental organizations participating. There will be an appearance by Smokey the Bear, firefighting equipment, live birds of prey, a raffle, food trucks and a controlled burn. Admission: Free. Halyburton Park, 4099 South 17th St., Wilmington. For more info: fireinthepines.org.

10/13 Yacht Venture 2018

5 p.m.- 9 p.m. Come spend an evening to benefit the Children's Museum of Wilmington at MarineMax, where you can enjoy cocktails and explore some of the area's finest yachts. Raffle and silent auction. After-party at the Bluewater Grill. Tickets: $100-$200. MarineMax, 130 Short St., Wrightsville Beach. For info and tickets: yachtventure.org.

10/13 25th Annual Pleasure Island Seafood Blue and Jazz Festival

Come celebrate the festival's "Year of the Woman," with performances by blues artist Ana Popovic, Kansas City's Danielle Nicole, and the celebrated Heather Gillis Band. Browse the Art & Wine Garden, shop for crafts, enjoy wine tastings. Tickets: $30-$60. Fort Fisher Military Recreation Area, 118 Riverfront Rd., Kure Beach. For info and tickets: (910) 458-8434 or pleasureislandnc.org.

10/13 Ironman 70.3 North Carolina Triathlon

7 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. The Ironman 70.3 Triathlon, will include a 1.2-mile swim, 56-mile bike ride, followed by a 13.1-mile run. The course begins with swimming at Wrightsville Beach and ends in downtown Wilmington across from the U.S.S. North Carolina battleship. To register and for more info: northcarolina70.3@ironman.com.

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10/14 Rhapsody in Blue

7:30 p.m. The North Carolina Symphony presents an evening of Gershwin and Copland, including Gershwin's tribute to the Roaring 20s, Rhapsody in Blue for piano and orchestra. Aaron Copland's Fanfare for the Common Man and Appalachian Spring will also be performed, accompanied by the Cherokee Chamber Singers. Tickets: $20-$83. Wilson Center, 703 North Third St., Wilmington. For tickets and info: (910) 362-7999.

10/17-19 Preservation North Carolina — Annual Conference

Join preservationists, architects, homeowners, and planners for Preservation North Carolina's annual conference in Wrightsville Beach this weekend. The conference will include lectures, tours of historic sites, awards and special events. Registration required. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Blvd., Wrightsville Beach. For more information and registration fees: (919) 832-3652 or presnc.org.

10/19 -20 48th Annual Waccamaw Siouan PowWow

The Waccamaw Siouan Tribe invites the public to its 48th annual powwow, celebrating tribal culture and traditions. Among the weekend's events: Siouan history, traditional foods, American Indian dance competition, gospel singing, and a ceremony honoring all veterans. Admission: $5. Waccamaw Siouan Tribe, 7239 Old Lake Road, Bolton. For more information: (910) 655-8778.

10/2 "Land and Sea"

7:30 p.m. The Wilmington Symphony Orchestra presents the Masterworks Series concert "Land And Sea," featuring celebrated mezzo soprano Mary Gayle Green. The program includes Aaron Copland's Tender Land Suite and Sir Edward Elgar's Sea Pictures, a song cycle of five songs, each written by a different poet. Tickets: $17-$47. Wilson Center, 703 North Third St., Wilmington. For tickets and info: (910) 362-7999 or capefearstage.com.

10/24 Fall Owl Prowl — Carolina Beach State Park

4:30-7:30 p.m. Jill Peleuses and Dave Weesner of Wild Bird & Garden will lead an Owl Prowl in Carolina Beach State Park, exploring the preserve's owl-friendly habitats. Admission: $35 per person; pre-registration is required. Carolina Beach State Park, 1121 Lake Park Blvd., Carolina Beach. For more info and registration: (910)343-6001 or (910) 457-9453.

10/26 Monster Movie Madness at the Mansion

7 p.m.- 10 p.m. The Bellamy Mansion presents at evening of frightening films, including Night of the Living Dead and The House on Haunted Hill. Hot dogs, popcorn, beer and wine available for purchase, and costumes are encouraged. Suggested donation: $5. Bellamy Mansion Museum, 503 Market St., Wilmington. For more info: (910) 251-3700 or bellamymansion.org.

10/27 Carousel Center Beer and Wine Festival

12 p.m. - 5 p.m. Lighthouse Beer and Wine presents the 18th annual Carousel Center Beer and Wine Festival. More than 100 craft breweries and wineries will be onhand providing samples to tickle your palate. VIP tickets available for early entry. Tickets: $20-$55. 11 Harnett Street, Wilmington. For tickets and info: (910) 256-8622 or lighthousebeerandwine.com.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday

Wrightsville Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside beach market offering a variety of fresh, locally grown produce, baked goods, plants and unique arts and crafts. Seawater Lane, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com.

Tuesday

Wine Tasting

6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus small plate specials all night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fotunateglass.com.

Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A night of live music performed by the area's best Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join in the fun. Admission: Free. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday

Free Wine Tasting at Sweet n Savory Cafe

5 p.m. – 8 p.m. Sample delicious wines for free. Pair them with a meal, dessert, or appetizer and learn more about the wines of the world. Live music starts at 7. Admission: Free. Sweet n Savory

Cafe, 1611 Pavilion Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-0115 or www.swetnsavorycafe.com.

Weekly Exhibition Tours

1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. A weekly tour of the iconic Cameron Arts Museum, featuring presentations about the various exhibits and the selection and installation process. Cameron Arts Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartsmuseum.org.

Ogden Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Local farmers, producers and artisans sell fresh fruits, veggies, plants, eggs, cheese, meat, honey, baked goods, wine, bath products and more. Ogden Park, 615 Ogden Park Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtonandbeaches.com/events-calendar/ogden-farmers-market.

Poplar Grove Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Open-air market held on the front lawn of historic Poplar Grove Plantation offering fresh produce, plants, herbs, baked goods and handmade artisan crafts. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 Us Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.poplargrove.org/farmers-market.

Thursday

Wrightsville Beach Brewery Farmers Market

2 p.m. – 6 p.m. Come support local farmers and artisans every Thursday afternoon in the beer garden at the Wrightsville Beach Brewery. Shop for eggs, veggies, meat, honey, and handmade crafts while enjoying one of the Brewery's tasty beers. Stay for live music afterwards. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach Brewery, 6201 Oleander Dr., Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-4938 or www.wbbeer.com.

Yoga at the CAM

12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and are open to both beginners and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday & Saturday

Cape Fear Museum Little Explorers

10 a.m. Meet your friends in Museum Park for fun, hands-on activities! Enjoy interactive circle time, conduct exciting experiments, and play games related to a weekly theme. Perfect for children ages 3 to 6 and their adult helpers. Admission: Free. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4370 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

Blackwater Adventure Tours

Join in an educational guided boat tour from downtown Wilmington to River Bluffs, exploring the mysterious beauty of the Northeast Cape Fear River. See website for schedule. River Bluffs, 1100 Chair Road, Castle Hayne. Info: (910) 623-5015 or www.riverbluffsliving.com.

Saturday

Carolina Beach Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor "island-style" market featuring live music and local growers, producers and artisans selling fresh local produce, wines meats, baked goods, herbal products and handmade crafts. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Highway 421 & Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-2977 or www.carolinabeachfarmersmarket.com.

Wilmington Farmers Market at Tidal Creek

8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Weekly gathering of vetted vendors with fresh produce straight from the farm. Sign up for the weekly newsletter for advanced news of the coming weekend's harvest. 5329 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. For info: thewilmingtonfarmersmarket.com.

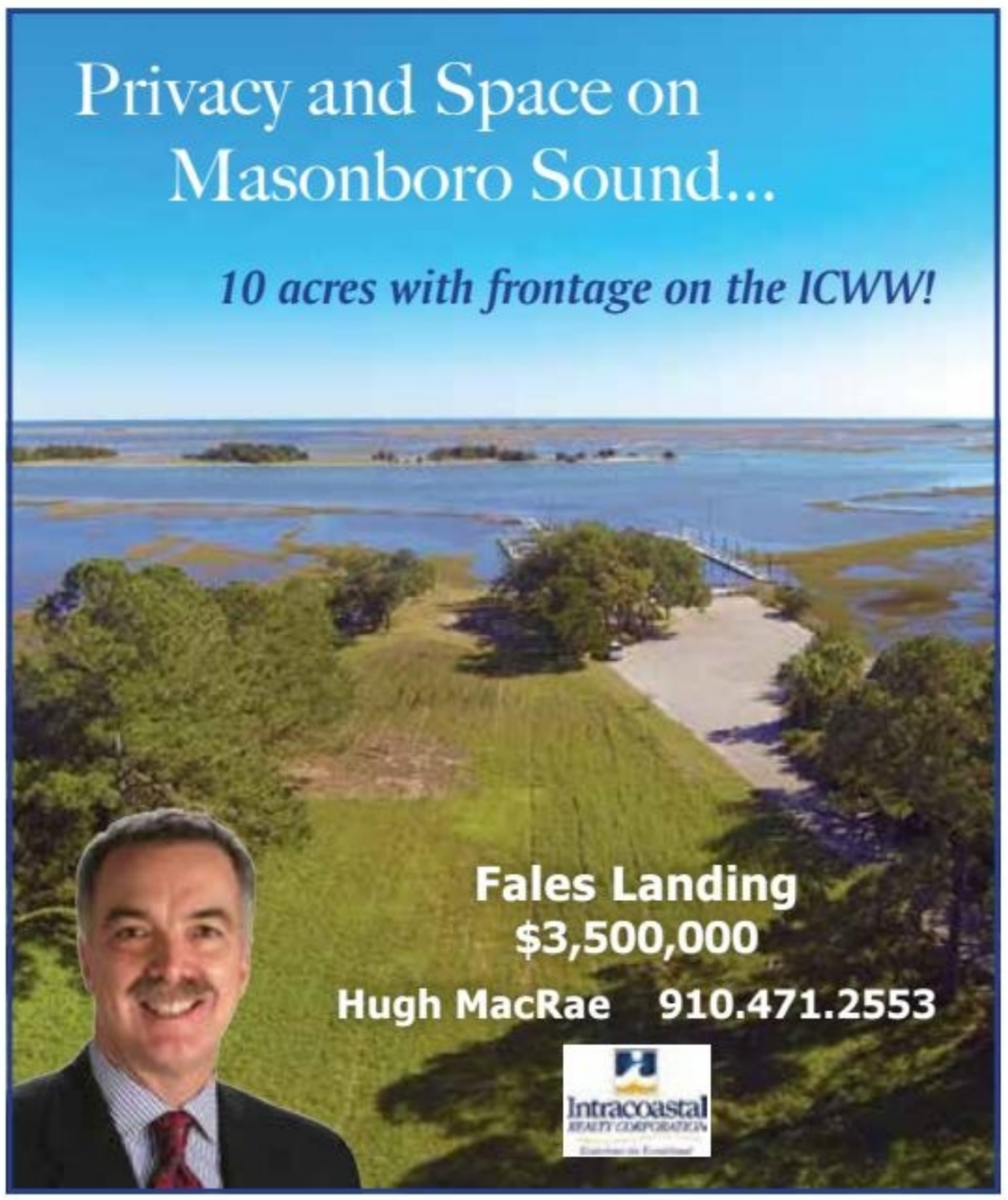
Riverfront Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artisans, crafters and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com/events/farmers-market.

Taste of Downtown Wilmington

2:15 p.m., 2:45 p.m., & 3:15 p.m. A weekly gourmet food tour by Taste Carolina, featuring some of downtown Wilmington's best restaurants. Each time slot showcases different food. See website for details. Admission: $55–75. Riverwalk at Market Street, 0 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (919) 237-2254 or www.tastecarolina.net/wilmington/

To add a calendar event, please contact calendar@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted by the first of the month, one month prior to the event.



Port City People

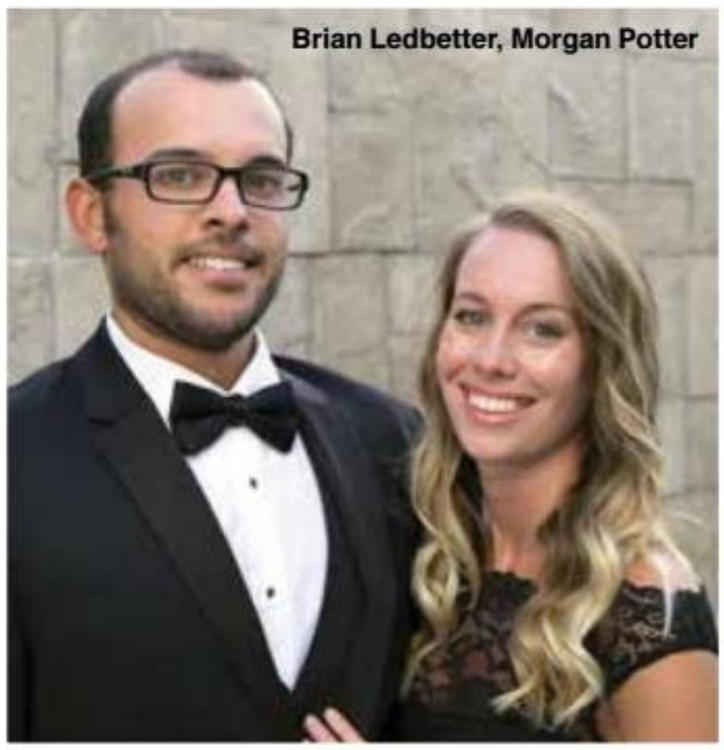
"Puttin' on the Glitz"

13th Annual Wilmington Fur Ball -

Benefiting the animals of New Hanover, Brunswick and Pender counties

Saturday, August 25, 2018

Photographs by Bill Ritenour


Brian Ledbetter, Morgan Potter

Chad & Mindy Nicoll, Josh & Karen Kneeland

Marcus & Jessica Conklin

Chuck Ohnmacht, Kathryn Peraza

Danny Dahl, Amanda Wehbie, Stephanie & James Mayew

Carly Wilson, Mark Stuart

Ben Phillips, Alyssa Woods

Jo & Bill Rotella, Jan & Jim Mancini

Mark & Amanda Kennard

Marcella & Eva Creighton

Daliah Rios, Rose Nudelman, Nachama Colon

Dr. Jeff & Donna Dineen

Port City People

Last Chance for White Pants Gala

Benefit for Lower Cape Fear Hospice Foundation

Saturday, August 25, 2018

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Cynthia & Peter Dugan, Dana Fisher

Buddy Green, Diana Rodd

Sharon Laney, Angie Ball, Don & Sandy Spiers

Ron Dye, Janet Phifer

Brenden & Sydney Pascale

Bryan & Kelly Thomas, Sabrina Collins, Tracey Gibson

Kristen Butler, Kate Fortune, Lynn O'Brien, Katie Ferree

Ashley Miller, Michelle Clark, Becky Brown

Kate & Ed Summersill

Veronica & Charlie Godwin, John Melvin, Heather Warren

Ross & Linda Highsmith

Dale & Jill Ward

Port City People

Lumina Daze

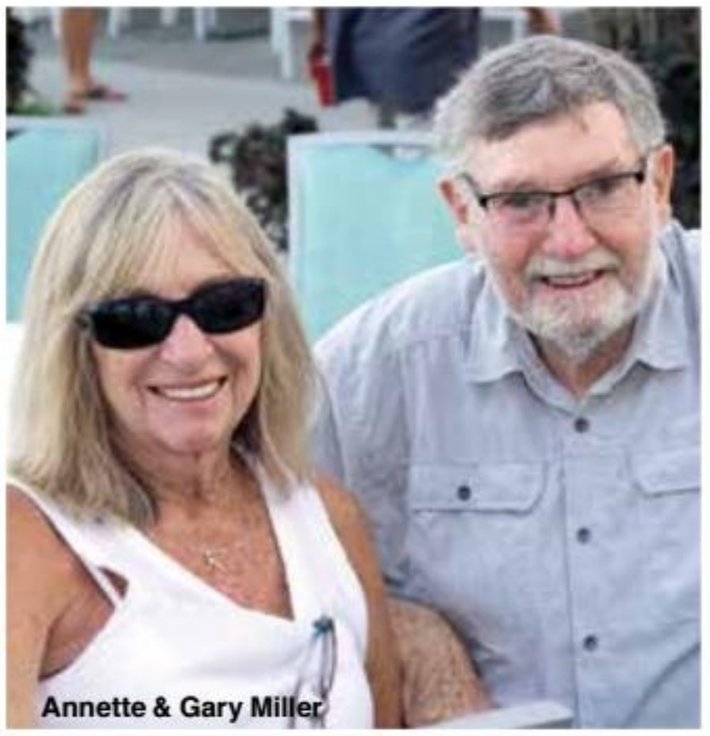
Benefit for the Wrightsville Beach Museum

Sunday, August 26, 2018

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Bobby Collins, Trina Morton, Susan Collins, Bob Morton

Emily, Lily & Van Williamson

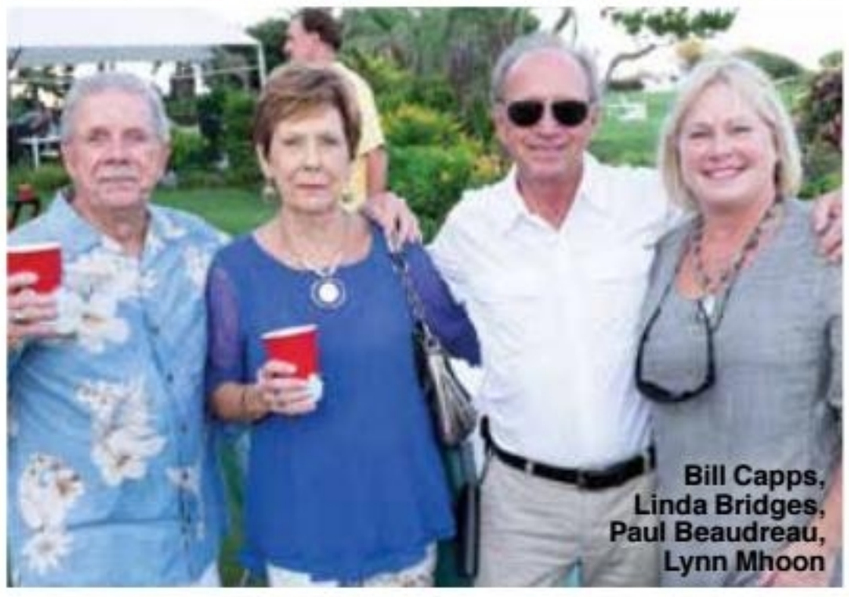


Annette & Gary Miller

Lisa Weeks, Sandi King

Lorraine Mitchell, Fred Detterman

John & Ronnie Thomas, Jill & Don Taber

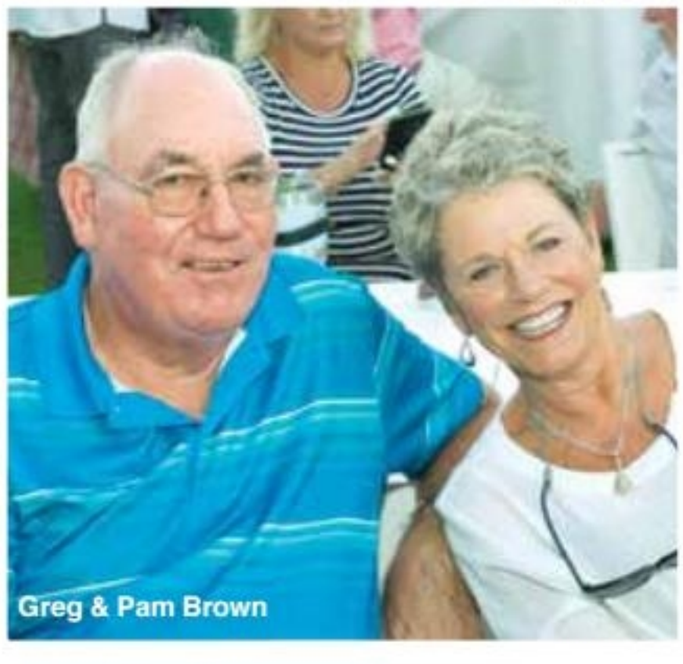


Bill Capps, Linda Bridges, Paul Beaudreau, Lynn Mhoon

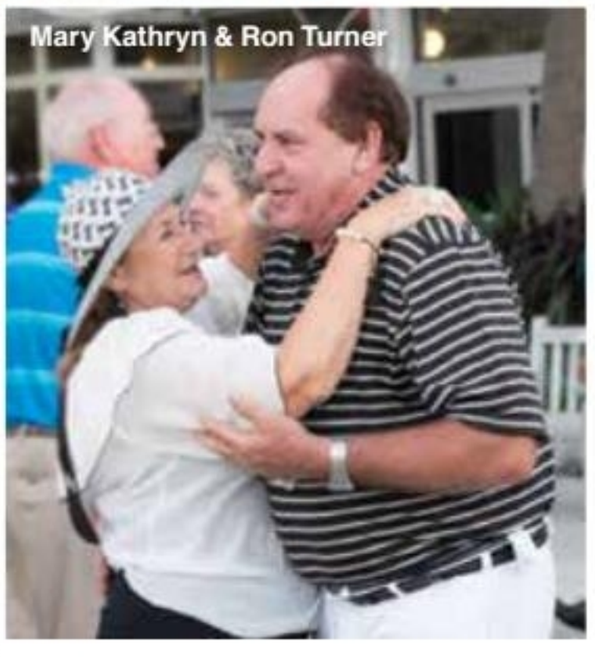
Carolyn & Jerome Pinckney

Pam Stephens, Jerry Archman

Maggie Aardema, Linda Lowe, Marilyn Cook, Marcia Morgan



Greg & Pam Brown



Mary Kathryn & Ron Turner

Stars and Star-Makers

Dazzling, yet old-fashioned, Librans treasure their nearest and dearest

By Astrid Stellanova

Star Children, our October-born enjoy longer lives and a better chance of becoming President; they are more romantic and athletic than the rest of us average Joes. Famous October babies are either stars themselves or star-makers: Julie Andrews, Kim Kardashian and that acid-tongued Simon Cowell with the angelic grin.

Pumpkins, bonfires and harvest moons are enough to make anyone grin; if not, then you may be an alien child. Before sending your DNA off to Ancestry.com, consider that our ancestors celebrated the deep connection with Mother Earth in late fall and were grateful for this golden time. As the days grow shorter, enjoy hearth and home — and chill, Baby. — Ad Astra, Astrid

Libra (September 23–October 22)
There's no shame in your game, Sugar. You are old-fashioned, just as accused. But you know how to love what you have and to make your nest a welcoming and special place. When you take stock of all the things in your plus column, notice how many old friends and long relationships you have made. That, Birthday Child, is a fine gift.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
You're tetchy, and more self-critical than normal. Don't shave an eyebrow off trying to fix a tee-ninesy mistake. Nobody else sees you through the same harsh lens. In fact, those who know you feel they can't live up to your standards. Relax, Honey, and realize you are no ordinary creature.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
Somebody you trust seems to be goading you toward a step you don't want to take. Don't that just grind your gears? Are they friend or frenemy? Buttercup, hitch up your britches and grin and bear it. They mean well, they just don't speak your language.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
Hearing the truth is like drinking from a firehose. Hard to swallow. Hurts. Yep. But here you are, swallowing another needed dose of reality. Now, Honey, it will require you to take another step and face one more test of your resolve and backbone.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
You've had to power through a challenge that tested your nerve — and sexy verve — on every level. But in the background, an ally has got your back like a wool sweater. They know you better than you know yourself, and don't want to see you fail.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
You took two steps forward and one backwards in a weird shuffle regarding health matters. Is Chick-fil-A your secret sponsor? Your devotion to habit and fast foods are at war with your best interests. Something has to give, Sugar. (And sugar and fried food are a good start.)

Aries (March 21–April 19)
False flattery is no reason to marry a prison pen pal. The power of a good line is indisputable, but Darling, you can't trust your bedazzled self this month. Snap out of it and ask yourself why you need a yes man or woman so much.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
Open mouth and exchange feet, Sugar. If you weren't so charming, a lot of your best pals would not be so forgiving. If you can do one more crucial thing, share the credit for a project completed and don't hog all the credit. Baby steps.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
Lordamercy! Take the next exit off the Ho Highway. Have you lost your grip? Think nobody has noticed? Well, Darling, they did. I'm not saying your standards are slipping, I'm saying they have conveniently disappeared. Chin up, head high and don't look back!

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
Sugar, time to learn how to mine gold from whatever you learned from whoever ticked you off. Actually, a few too many did. You've been unable to settle, get rest, find a comfy place with yourself lately and it's taking a toll. Turn that crazy train around.

Leo (July 23–August 22)
Is Boss Hog your role model? If you watch TV, you begin to think that everybody has lost their ever-loving minds. Raised voices don't make for stronger arguments, Honey. Somebody has to set a better example — and why not a natural leader like you?

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
Feeling duller than a plastic fast-food knife? By the end of the summer days, you've battled to get your game back. Mix and mingle with a friend you look up to, and energize yourself. You are very affected by the company you keep.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

The Crazy Family

It could just be you . . .

By Beth MacDonald

It's a safe assumption that most neighborhoods have at least one crazy family. If you look around and don't know which family that is, it might be yours. That's absolutely the case with us.

When I look around my peaceful section of town, I see smiling children playing in their yards and well-behaved dogs on leashes, all properly pooper-scooped. People are well dressed, having civil conversations. Every Thursday night their trash is out and the recycling bins are neatly stacked for Friday pickup. I envy these people. They seem to pull off the illusion of having it sooo together.

We, too, have a lovely, well-appointed home. We are well traveled. We have diplomas, in a box someplace. I do try my best to maintain the appearance of social acceptability in public; it just never happens to come off that way. You can't really start a conversation with your neighbor about your exciting trip to Cuba while your googly-eyed mixed-breed dog is trying to mate with a holly bush.

My husband says he doesn't yell. He is a "motivational speaker to those who won't listen." You can hear him any given day giving several motivational speeches to our dogs while listening to bluegrass music. It is no coincidence that he is shouting orders to barking maniacs with banjo music playing.

Our dogs get way too excited with every leaf that blows by our glass front door. Any neighbor who walks by is met with barking and jumping. When one of our three dogs recently journeyed to the Great Beyond, a neighbor commented in exasperation, "Finally." I wasn't even offended. I just shrugged, knowing how hard it is for people to pass our home.

Our son, a successful young man who lives on his own, likes to put Band-Aids on his car to cover any scratches it incurs. It has now incurred approximately 150 scratches. When he comes to visit on weekends, his car looks like it's a mobile first aid kit.

My fellow moms seem to live such color-coordinated lives. Oh, I'm sure they have their own struggles; we all do. They just seem to do it all while maintaining the look of supermodels. They each have three or more children in tow, clean and happy, while I drag yard waste to the curb in mismatched clothes, bleeding from weeding. I wonder how I ended up in dishwashing gloves, my husband's camouflage Crocs (questioning why my husband even has camouflage Crocs), looking like I'm trying to bury a body, and somehow surrounded by way more plastic than I can explain.

My friend Janine says I'm the "garden variety crazy." She told me when she comes over I'm at least dressed, and she's never eaten out of the dog bowls — so there's that to be proud of.

Any given Friday at eight in the morning the rumble of the trash trucks disrupts my peaceful ritual. Scrambling to put my coffee down, I furiously begin to look for clothes. Anyone's clothes will do; they never match. I begin the mad dash from the house to the curb in what looks like a ridiculous live version of the old '90s Nickelodeon network game show Double Dare where the prize is getting slimed with my own week-old garbage.

One particular Friday I was finished doing my morning cardio/trash dash and came back to find a very large and intimidating spider on the kitchen door window. This spider had a neatly woven, well-organized and fashionable zigzag web. It was clearly mocking me. I grabbed a can of Raid (to save my life, certainly not my dignity). Spraying poison on one spider really upset a wasp's nest that was apparently hidden behind a flowerpot.

Wasps began to swarm me. I began to scream and do an ancient, interpretive dance of terror. None of my neighbors were the least bit disturbed, concerned, or even surprised by this. Not one.

Beth MacDonald is a suburban misadventurer that likes to make words up. She loves to travel with her family and read everything she can.

ILLUSTRATION BY MERIDITH MARTENS

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"When you've been a part of a community for more than 30 years, people get to know you. They know whether they can depend on you. They know you'll be straight-up with them. Pay attention to every detail. And go the extra mile. That's how we've built our business. Old-fashioned? Maybe. Effective? You bet."

Ronnie Hunt

Ronnie Hunt, Partner

RONNIE HUNT

Ronnie is a beach boy through and through. He graduated from UNCW and met his wife while waiting tables at the Bridge Tender. During the summer you are likely to find him out on the water. His favorite summertime food is locally-caught fish (preferably hooked on his line).

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